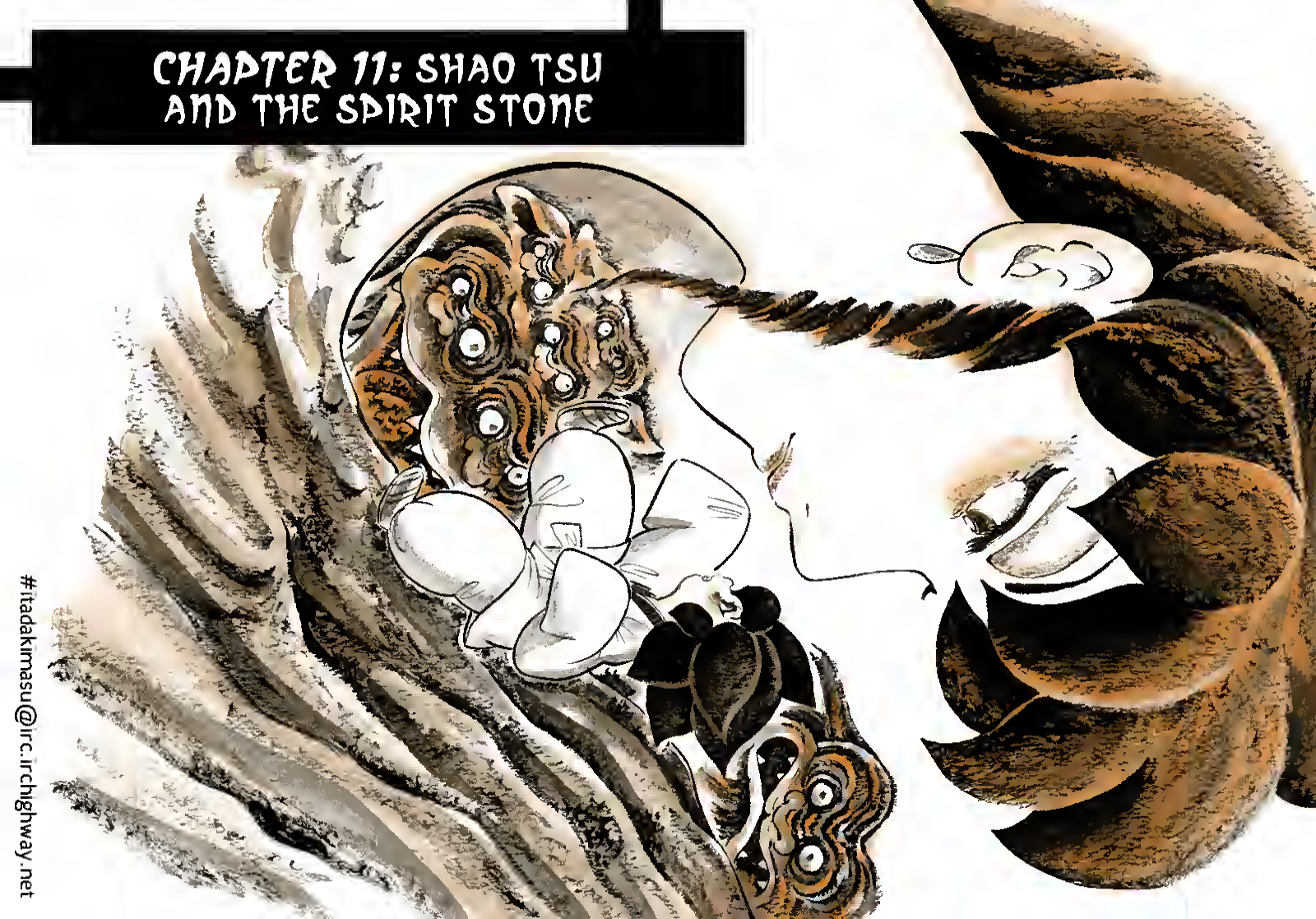
CHAPTER 11: SHAO TSU AND THE SPIRIT STONE



#itadakimasu@irc.irchighway.net

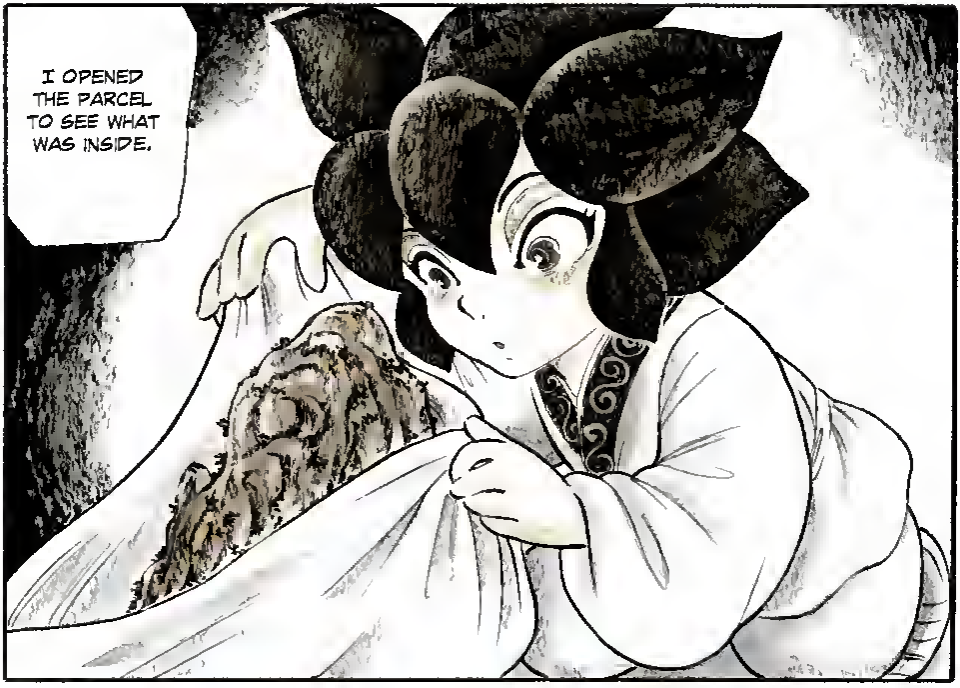
SO YOU'RE MY UNWANTED APPRENTICE. HOW TROUBLESOME. I WONDER IF I EVEN HAVE ANYTHING TO TEACH YOU.
WHY ARE YOU SMILING LIKE THAT? YOU'RE AN ODD ONE, AREN'T YOU?

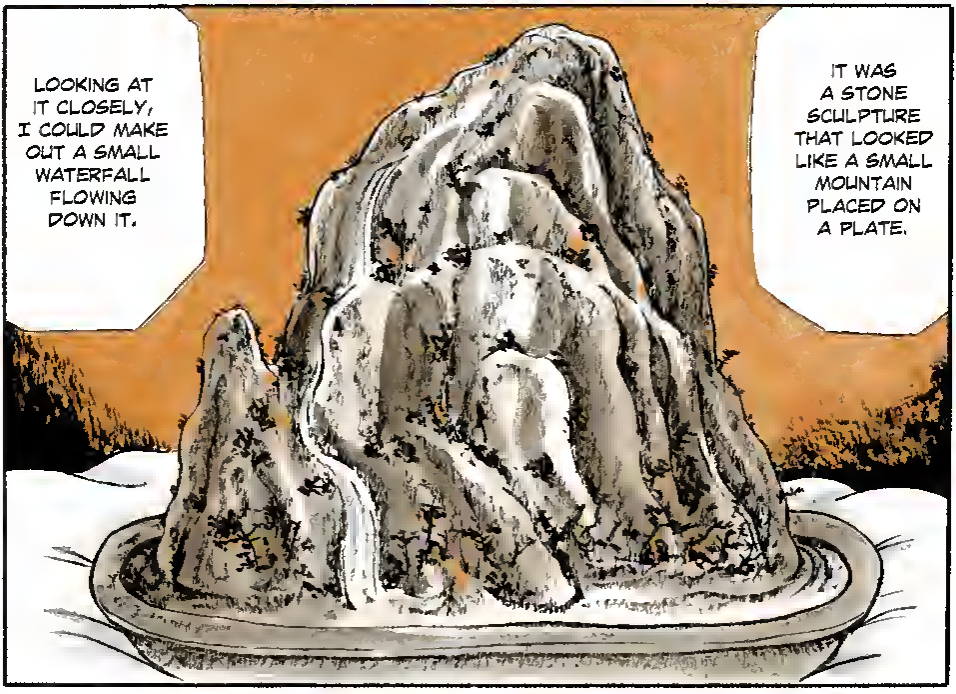
SHAO TSU, I'M GOING OUT.
IF YOU WANT TO STAY HERE, AT LEAST CLEAN THE PLACE.
SEE YOU, SISTER!

I'M SHAO TSU. I HOUSE-SIT HERE.
WHO ARE YOU? DO YOU HAVE SOME BUSINESS WITH TENOME?

I HAVE A PACKAGE FOR HER.
SO I'LL BE LEAVING IT HERE.

HEEEY, WAIT! WHO SENT THE PAKAGE?!
HEHEHE


I OPENED THE PARCEL TO SEE WHAT WAS INSIDE.


LOOKING AT IT CLOSELY, I COULD MAKE OUT A SMALL WATERFALL FLOWING DOWN IT.
IT WAS A STONE SCULPTURE THAT LOOKED LIKE A SMALL MOUNTAIN PLACED ON A PLATE.

HEH. LOOKS INTERESTING.

HU-HUH?

WHEN DID I GET TO SUCH A PLACE?
WHERE... IS THIS?

HAH!
ハナ!
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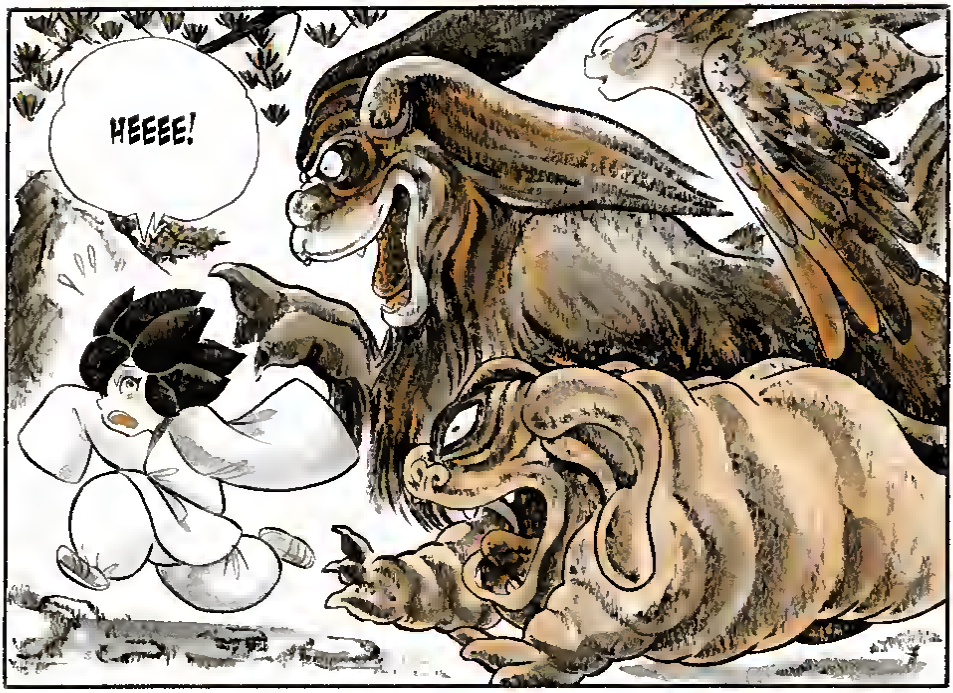
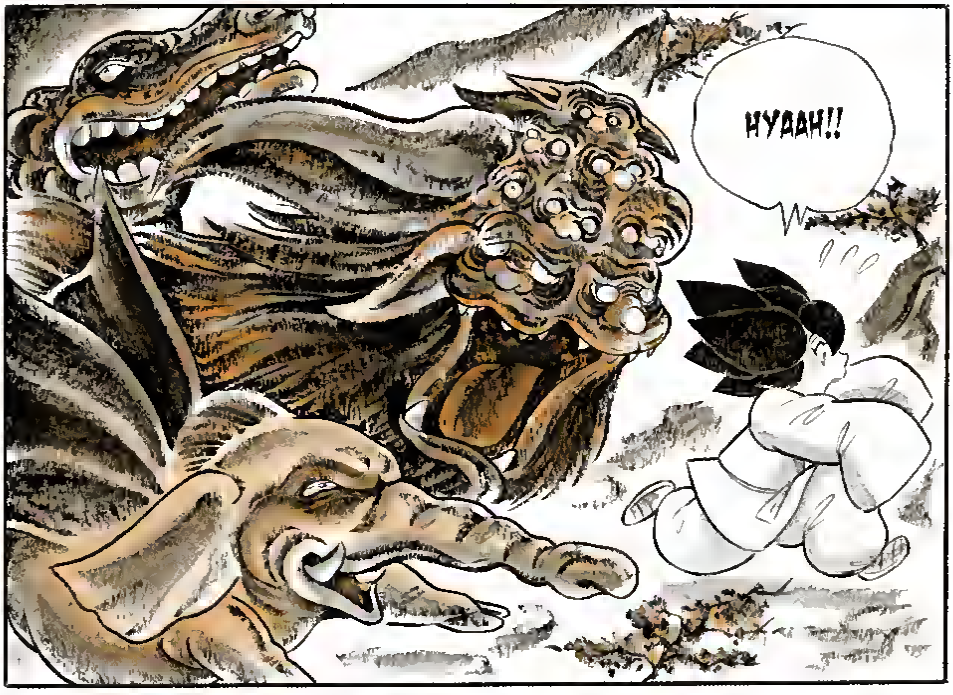
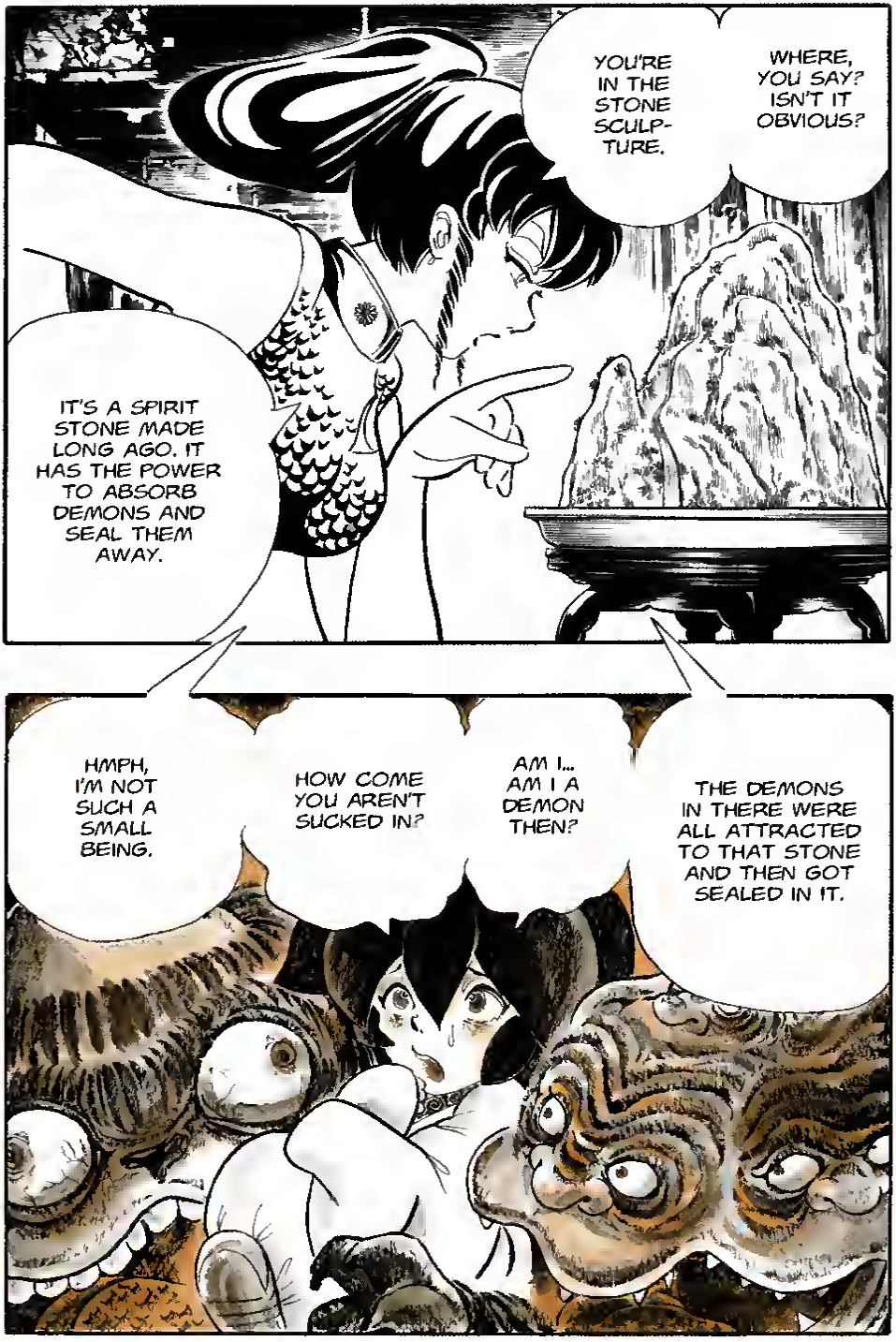

HEEEE!

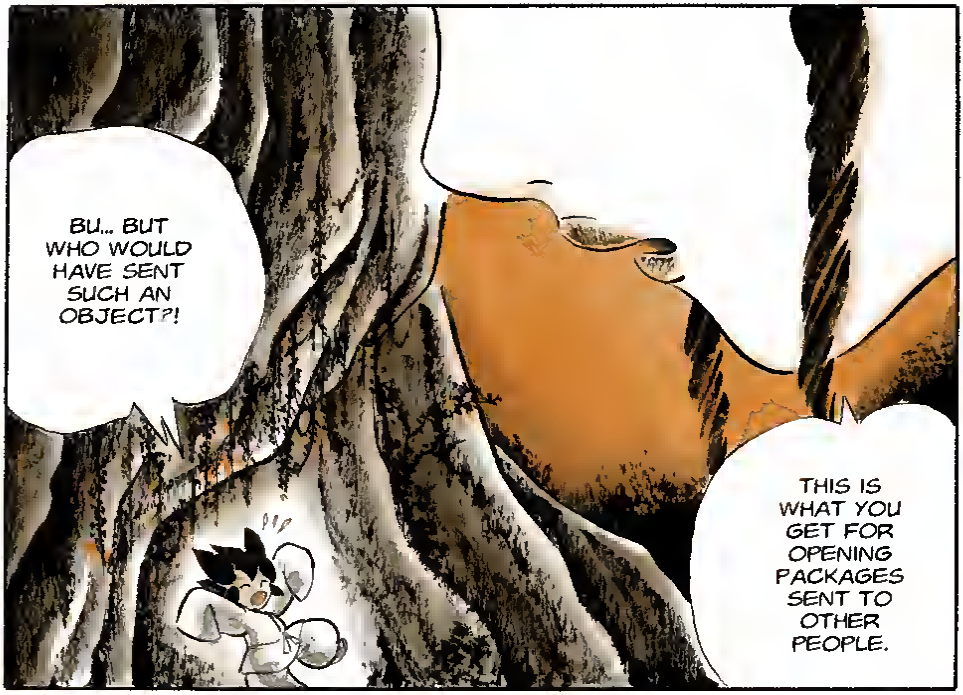

HYAAH!!

WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT WAS WHAT,
I JUST RAN IN A DAZE.

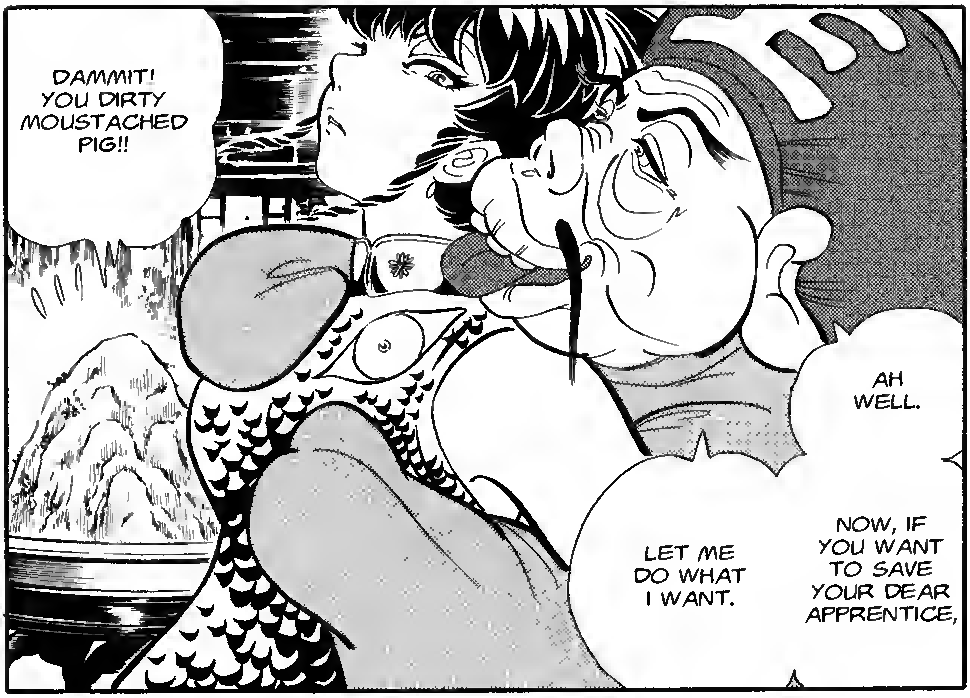
THIS PLACE HAD NO NIGHT OR DAY. I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW MANY DAYS I RAN.

HEY, SISTER!
WHERE THE HECK IS THIS PLACE?!


IT'S A SPIRIT STONE MADE LONG AGO. IT HAS THE POWER TO ABSORB DEMONS AND SEAL THEM AWAY.
YOU'RE IN THE STONE SCULPTURE.
WHERE, YOU SAY? ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?
HMPH, I'M NOT SUCH A SMALL BEING.
HOW COME YOU AREN'T SUCKED IN?
AM I... AM I A DEMON THEN?
THE DEMONS IN THERE WERE ALL ATTRACTED TO THAT STONE AND THEN GOT SEALED IN IT.


BU... BUT WHO WOULD HAVE SENT SUCH AN OBJECT?!
THIS IS WHAT YOU GET FOR OPENING PACKAGES SENT TO OTHER PEOPLE.

HOHOHO. I JUST CAN'T GIVE UP ON THIS YOUNG LADY.
YOU KNOW, YOUR FORMER MASTER.
HMPH, IT WAS MISTER WAN HERE.
BUT TO THINK SHAO TSU WOULD GET CAUGHT IN MY TRAP INSTEAD.

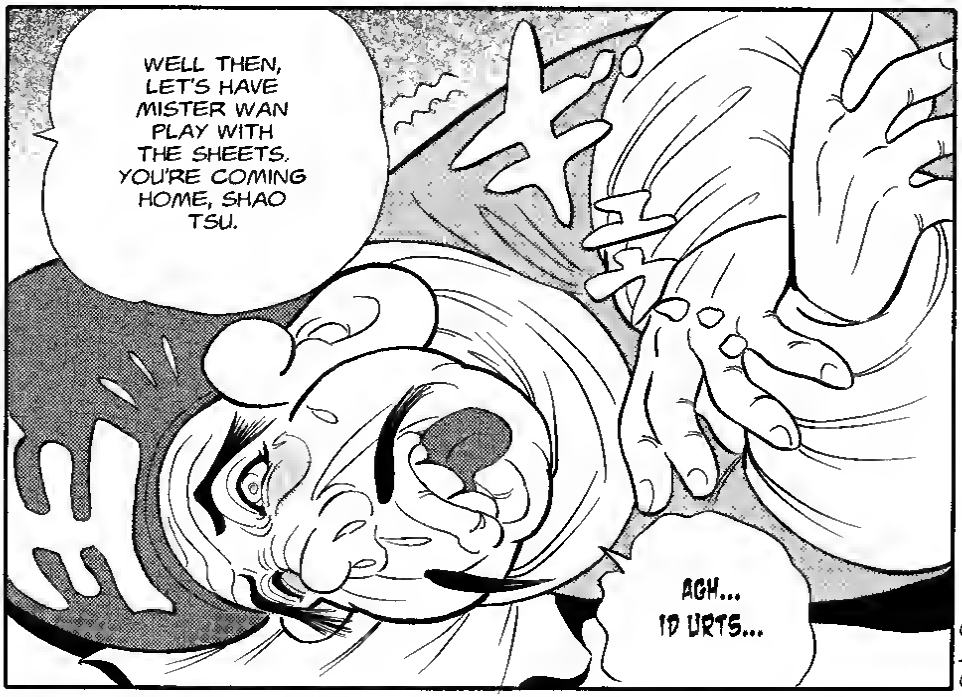

DAMMIT! YOU DIRTY MOUSTACHED PIG!!
AH WELL.
NOW, IF YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR DEAR APPRENTICE,
LET ME DO WHAT I WANT.

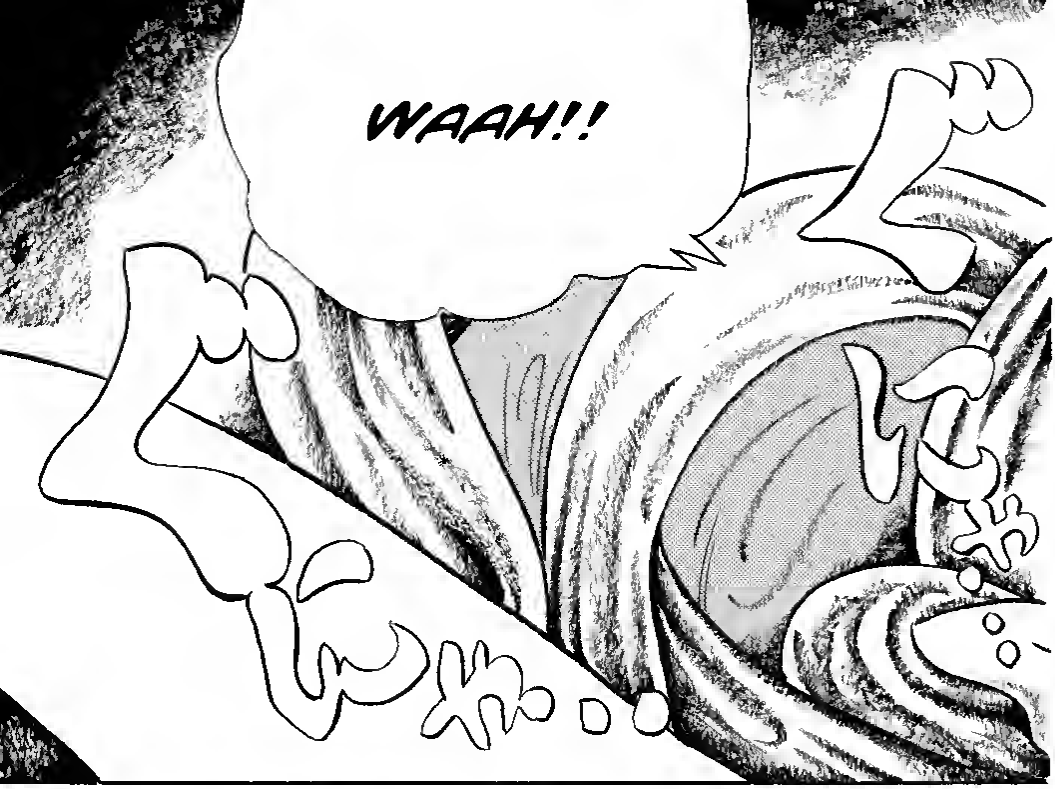
HMPH, YOU MEDDLED IN MY AFFAIRS ON YOUR OWN AND CAUSED ME TROUBLE.
THOUGH I SUPPOSE YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN.
I WOULD DISGRACE THE NAME OF TENOME IF I ABANDONED AN APPRENTICE,
EVEN A LITTLE KID WHO MERELY TOOK UP THE NAME ON HIS OWN.
SISTER!

LET'S SPARE EACH OTHER THE TROUBLE, SHALL WE?
I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT.
NOW, COME TO BED.

HOHOHO! TO THE POINT. I LIKE IT
DON'T DO IT, SISTER! NOT WITH THAT GUY!!
HU... HUH?
STOP IT, PLEASE! I- I'M FINE HERE. I'M GETTING ALONG WELL WITH THE MONSTERS ANYWAY!!
HEEH. SUCH WHITE SKIN.

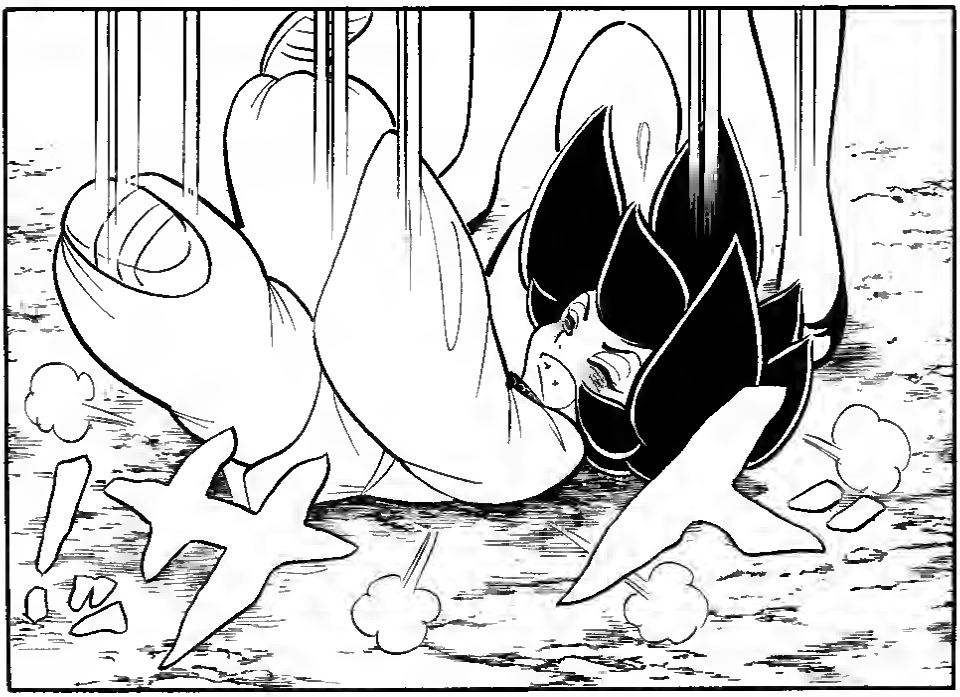
WAH...
WAH!


WELL THEN, LET'S HAVE MISTER WAN PLAY WITH THE SHEETS. YOU'RE COMING HOME, SHAO TSU.
AGH... ID URTS...


WAAH!!

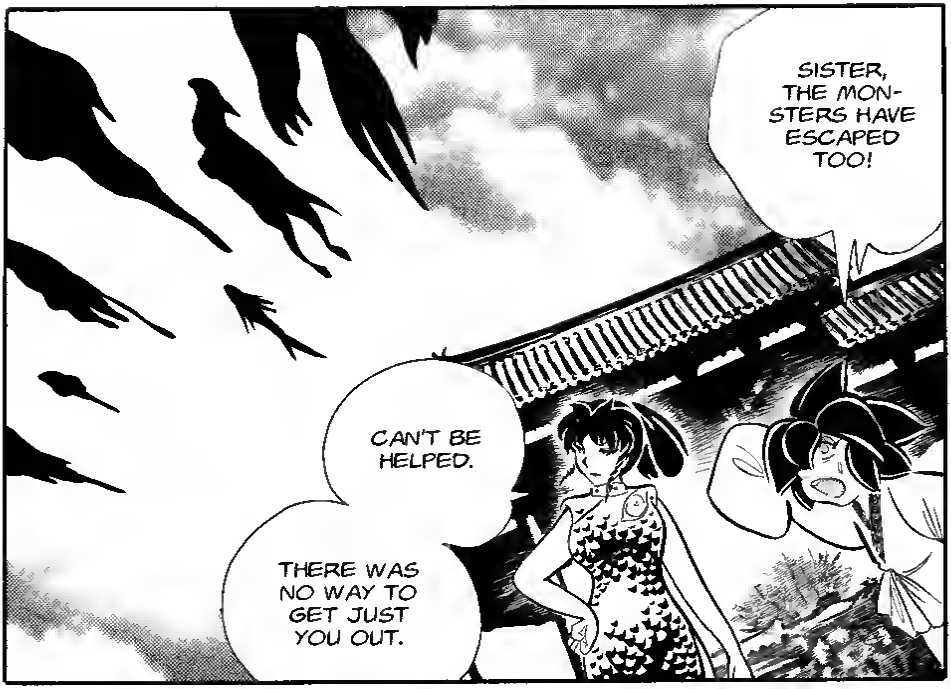
U... UM, SISTER? IS IT STILL POSSIBLE FOR ME TO GET OUT OF HERE?
OF COURSE YOU CAN GET OUT.

JUST WAIT A MINUTE.
EEHH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY WAIT...?



I GOT OUT JUST LIKE THAT?
EH? WHAT'S THIS?

STEP ASIDE.
HUH?
IT LOOKS LIKE YOU WON'T BE THE ONLY THING TO FALL OUT.



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AFTER SEEING SISTER'S ALMOST FRIGHTENING, COY SMILE AND THINKING ABOUT IT,
I WAS CERTAINLY HER INFATUATED "UNWANTED APPRENTICE".
WELL, COUNTLESS MONSTERS PROWL THE NIGHTS OF THIS WORLD ANYWAY.
ADDING A FEW MORE IS JUST A DROP IN THE OCEAN.

◎ END ◎

もの怪草紙

弐

高橋葉介

Chapter 12: Tenome Working and Dreamwalking

I AM TENOME, A HUMBLE PERFORMER.
I GO AROUND AND RAISE PEOPLE'S SPIRITS.
ENJOY THIS ONE-NIGHT DREAM SHOW TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT!

I HAVEN'T WALKED THE STREETS AT NIGHT IN YEARS!
THIS IS AWESOME!

MY BODY'S SO LIGHT!
IT'S LIKE I'VE GROWN WINGS!
BEING WITH A BEAUTY LIKE YOU MAKES MY HEART LIGHT, TOO.
AREN'T YOU QUITE THE FLATTERER?
MIKEYYY!!!

YIKES!
YOU CHEATING SWINE! HOW DARE YOU LEAVE ME!?
WHO IS THIS GIRL!?

WHEW, THAT WAS CRAZY.
LET'S LEAVE HER ALONE...
OH, YEAH! THIS IS MORE LIKE IT!
WE'RE EXPLORING A DESERTED TROPICAL ISLAND!

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO HUNT ANIMALS IN UNEXPLORED JUNGLES!
WITH A BEAUTIFUL GIRL WRAPPED IN ANIMAL SKINS AT MY SIDE.
NOW COME AT ME! JUNGLE BEASTS!

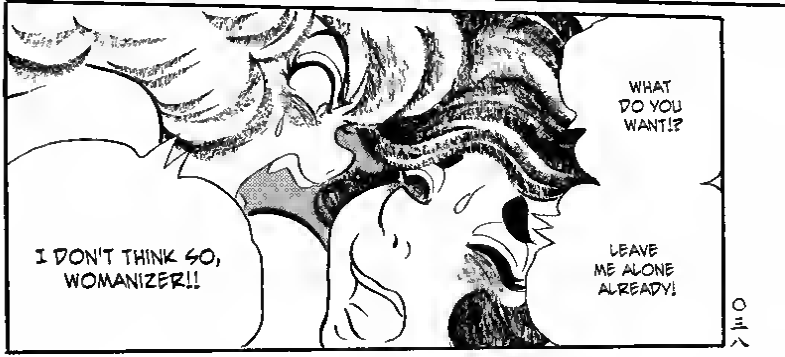
AND HERE WE GO! IS IT A TIGER? A GORILLA?
GRUNT
WATCH OUT! SOMETHING'S COMING.
Chomp
Chomp
ROOOO

ADULTERER! UNFAITHFUL PRICK!!
CRUSH
WAAAHHH!

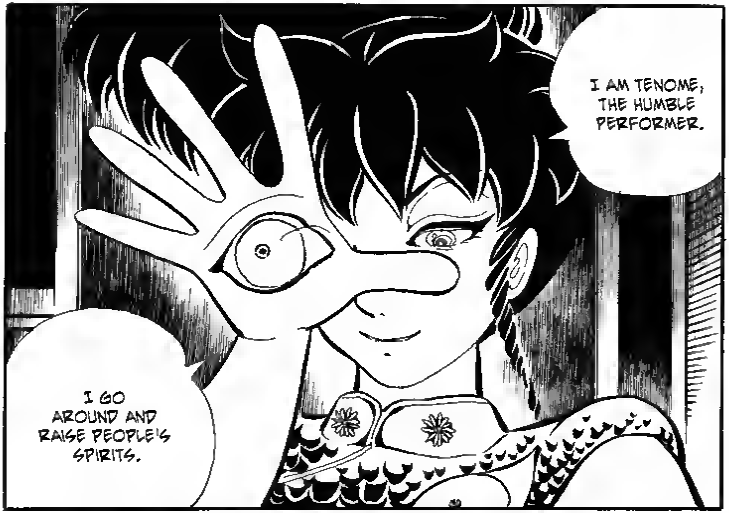
NEXT ONE, PLEASE!
L-LET GO!

NOW THE OCEAN!
GONNA CATCH FISH UNDER THE SEA WITH A MERMAID!

"CATCHING FISH", MY FOOT!
YOU CAN'T EVEN SWIM, MIKEY!!
GUEHHH!


WHAT DO YOU WANT!?
LEAVE ME ALONE ALREADY!
I DON'T THINK SO, WOMANIZER!!

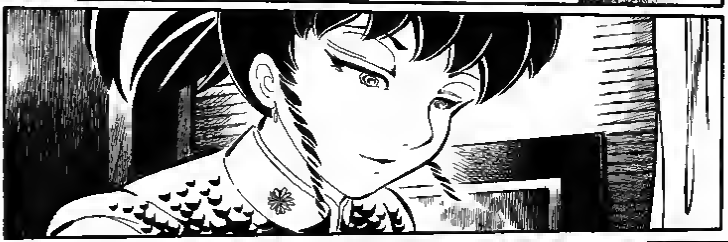
YOU DIED SO LONG AGO AND LEFT ME ALL ALONE!
B-BUT I COULDN'T HELP IT!
THAT'S RIGHT... I'M SORRY.
I'M SORRY, MIKEY. YOU WERE LONELY, WEREN'T YOU?

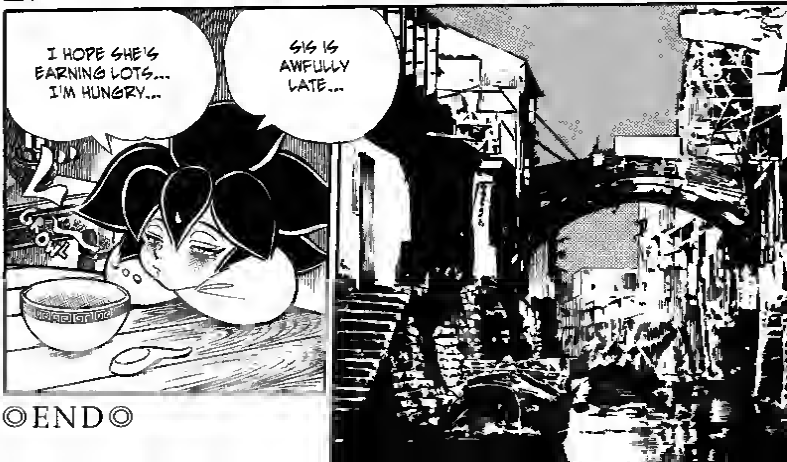

I AM TENOME, THE HUMBLE PERFORMER.
I GO AROUND AND RAISE PEOPLE'S SPIRITS.

WITH THAT ONE-NIGHT DREAM SHOW, MASTER MIKEY?
WERE YOU SATISFIED

YEAH...
I LIKED IT A LOT, THANK YOU.
COME TO THINK OF IT,
THE "DREAM" I WANTED TO SEE MOST--

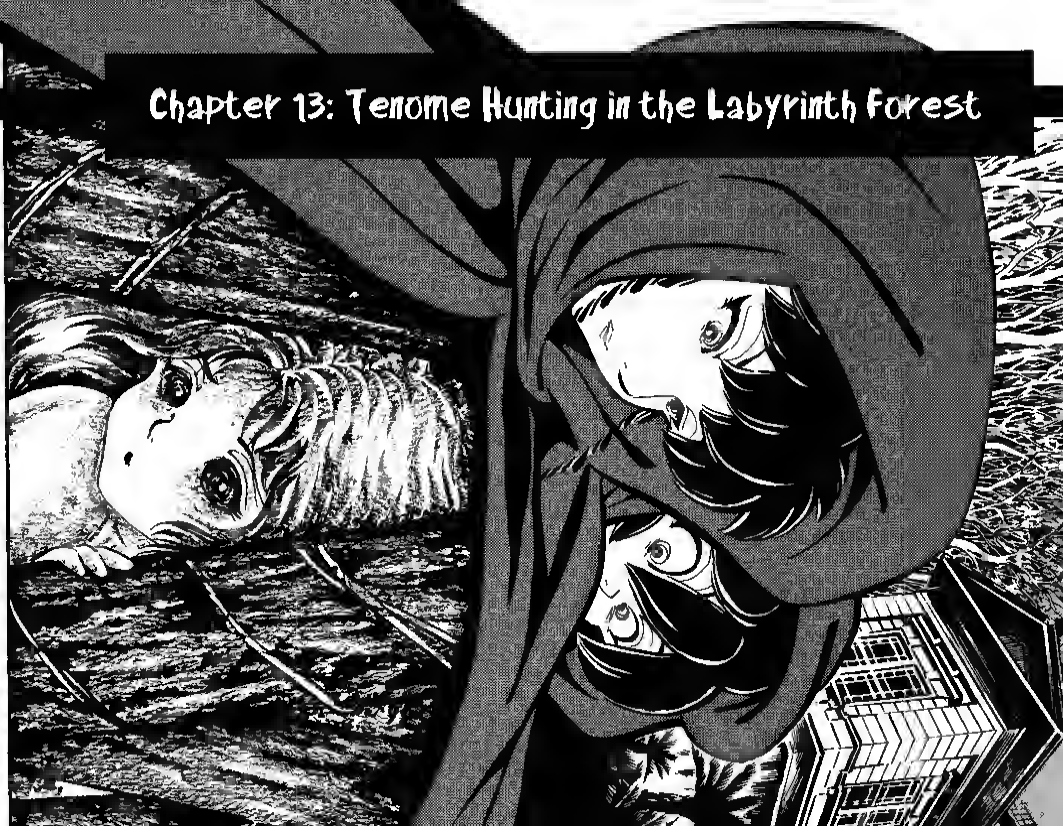
MUST HAVE BEEN MY WIFE BEING JEALOUS.




I HOPE SHE'S EARNING LOTS... I'M HUNGRY...
SIS IS AWFULLY LATE...

◎END◎

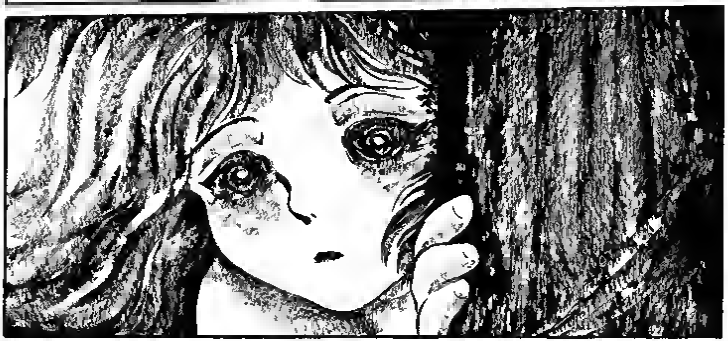
Chapter 13: Tenome Hunting in the Labyrinth Forest



HEY, SIS...
SOMEONE'S WATCHING US FROM THOSE TREES. LOOK.

I KNOW.
JUST IGNORE HER, OR SHE'LL COME NEAR.
WE GOT WORK TO DO FIRST.

TCH!
PUTTING ON A SHOW FOR THESE RICH SLOBS IS GONNA STINK!
QUIET.
IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, GO HOME.

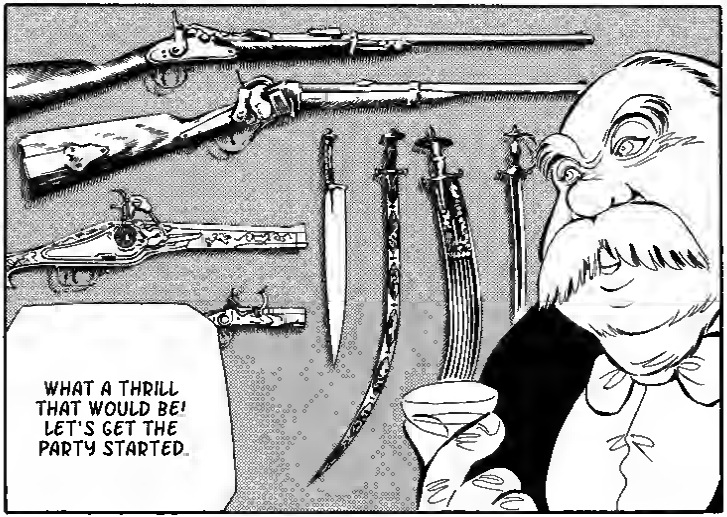


HMPH. WHAT A BORING SHOW.

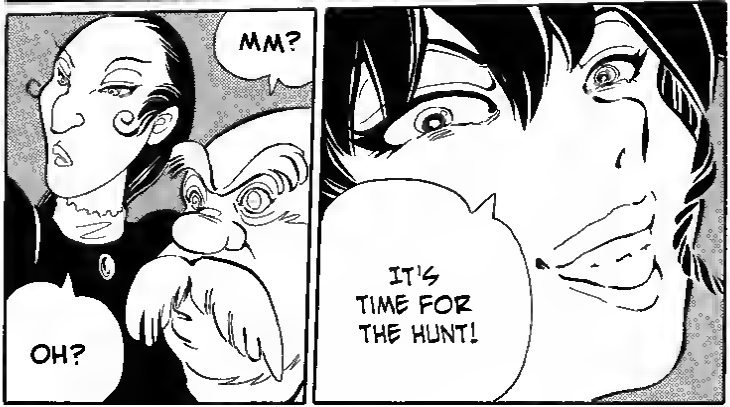
ENOUGH OF THIS GARBAGE, WHEN WILL IT END?
JUST WAIT A BIT MORE, THE FUN BEGINS AFTER THIS.

WE GOT BOTH BIG AND SMALL GAME TODAY.
OH YES, OUR FIRST HUNT IN A WHILE.
THEN I'LL TAKE THE SHRIMP.
I'M HUNTING HER.
HMM, THAT BITCH IS VERY APPEALING I'VE TIRED OF HUNTING KIDS.

FUFUFU, SHE'LL PROBABLY SCREAM AND RUN AROUND THE FOREST.


WHAT A THRILL THAT WOULD BE! LET'S GET THE PARTY STARTED.

THAT WAS THE OPENING ACT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
THE REAL FUN BEGINS NOW!

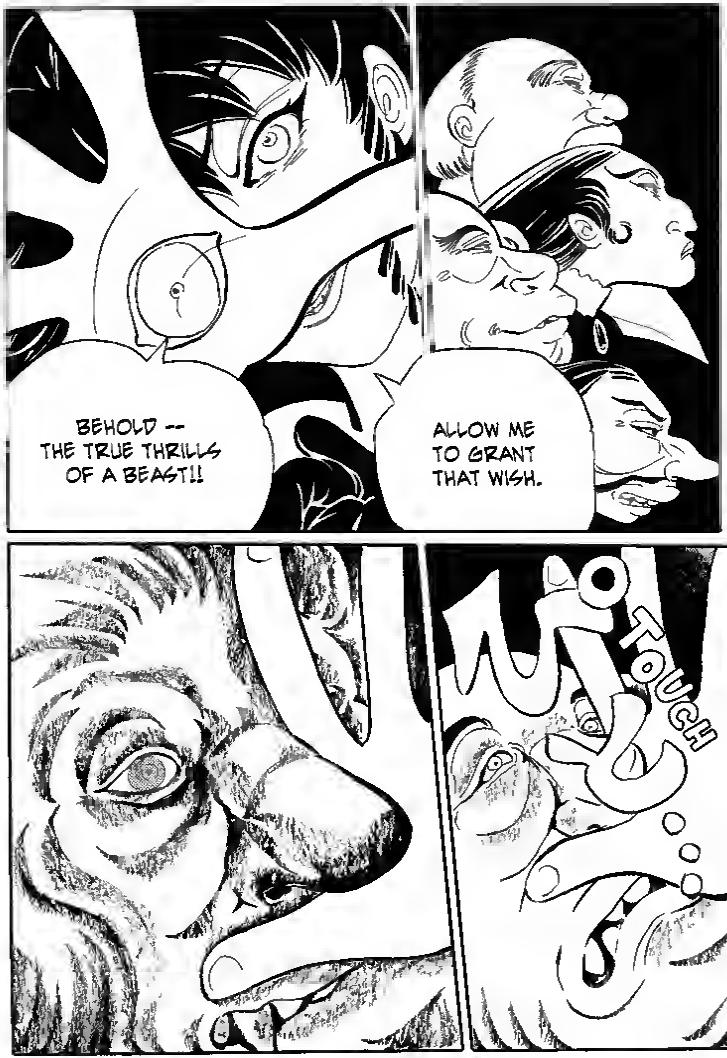

MM?
OH?
IT'S TIME FOR THE HUNT!

OHO...
HMPH; SO YOU KNEW?
BUT OF COURSE!
MAN-HUNTING WAS ALWAYS THE NOBILITY'S ULTIMATE SPORT THROUGH THE AGES!
LIKENING HUMANS TO BEASTS AND BIRDS HARRYING AND HUNTING THEM DOWN! A LOVELY GAME THAT SATISFIES YOUR INNER ANIMAL!
SMALL WONDER CELEBS SUCH AS YOU BECOME OBSESSED

OF COURSE, WE WERE HUNTING YOU EITHER WAY.
WE CAN'T LET YOU GO KNOWING SO MUCH.
NOW THIS IS INTERESTING!
I THINK WE'LL ENJOY OUR PREY TODAY.
TO BE HONEST,
THAT GIRL FROM LAST TIME WAS LACKING.

LET'S NOT BE HASTY HERE!
I HAD A REASON TO BRING THIS UP.
YOUR ENJOYMENT OF THE GAME SHALL BE DOUBLED TODAY!
OH? DO TELL.
WH-WHAT D'YOU MEAN, SISTER?
NO DOUBT YOU ALL GIVE CHASE
WITH WEAPONS SUCH AS THESE.

CERTAINLY A BLOOD-BOILING, HEART-SKIPPING MOMENT OF DELIGHT!!
BUT WHY STOP THERE? HOW ABOUT SOME GREATER SATISFACTION!?
DO NOT RELY ON WEAPONS,
BUT REND YOUR PREY WITH BARE HANDS! GOUGE ITS FLESH WITH YOUR CLAWS, RIP OUT ITS ENTRAILS WITH YOUR TEETH.
TASTE THE HOT SALTY BLOOD WITH YOUR TONGUE! VERILY THE PLEASURE OF SLAUGHTER!
WOULD YOU NOT AGREE?


BEHOLD -- THE TRUE THRILLS OF A BEAST!!
ALLOW ME TO GRANT THAT WISH.
TOUCH

OH...
OHH!?
YOU ARE THE LION!
EH?
EH!?
AND A SERPENT FOR YOU!

YOU ARE A WOLF!
AND YOU ARE A BEAR!
OHHHHHH!?

SPLENDID! POWER IS COURSING THROUGH ME!!
I'LL SWALLOW THEM! I'LL SWALLOW EVERYONE!!
I'LL RIP 'EM AND CRUSH 'EM! NOW, WHERE'S OUR PREY!?
I'LL GORGE ON THEIR MEAT! I'LL DRINK THEIR BLOOD!!

Huh?
Eh?
YOUR PREY IS HERE!
ROARRR
W-WAIT A SEC, SIS!
YOU BETTER HURRY! CATCH HER QUICK! THE LITTLE RABBIT IS GETTING AWAY!!

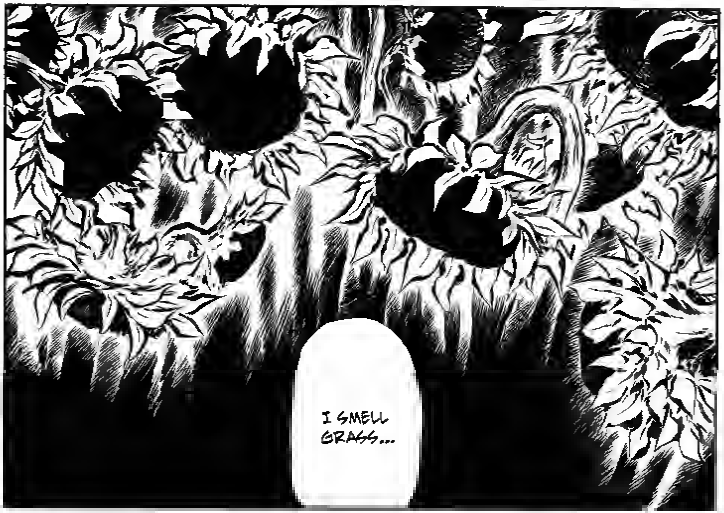
EEEEEE!!
HELP
MEEEEEE!!

CONVINCED THAT THEY ARE BEASTS,
AND NOW THEY'LL WANDER THESE WOODS FOREVER.
HEHEHE, LOOK AT THEM GO!
THEY WENT AFTER THAT GIRL, THINKING SHE WAS ME!
THEY'LL CONTINUE THEIR NEVER-ENDING HUNT.

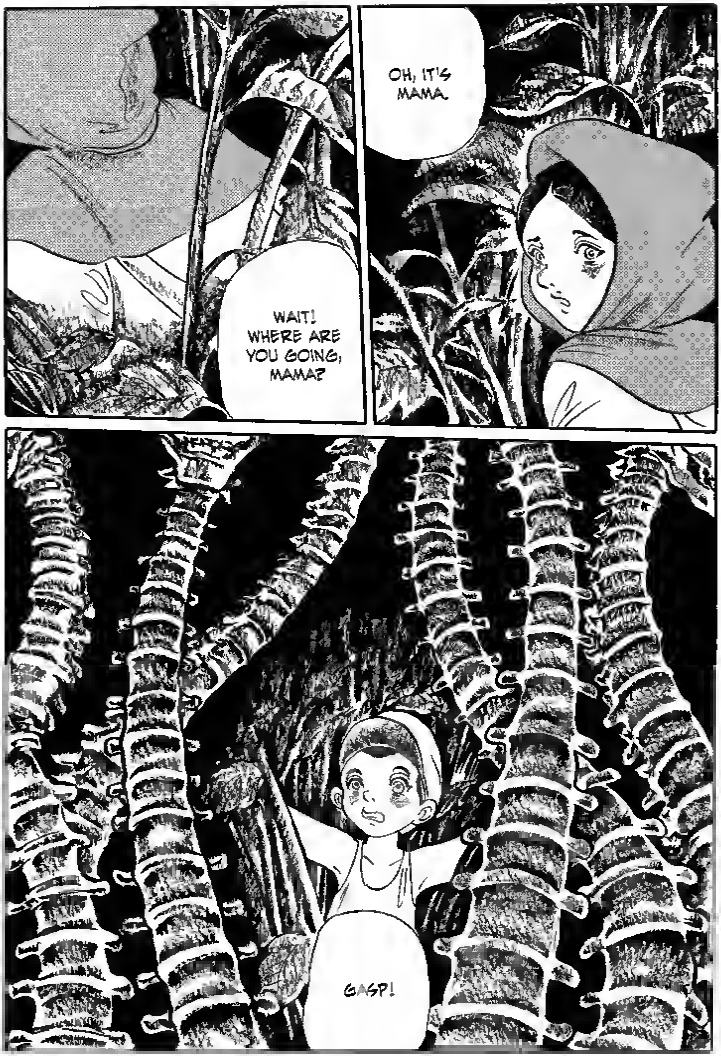
THEY'RE TRAPPED IN THIS LABYRINTH FOREST FOR ETERNITY.
SO, SIS.
WHO'S PAYING US TONIGHT?
...shit.

◎END◎

Chapter 14: Sunflowers


I SMELL GRASS...

WHERE... AM I?
WHO'S THERE?

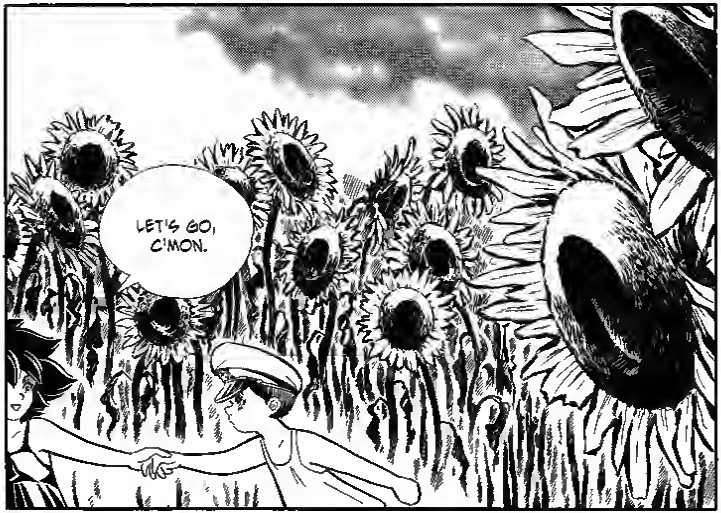

WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MAMA?
OH, IT'S MAMA.
GASP!

AH-
AH-
AH!!
AH...

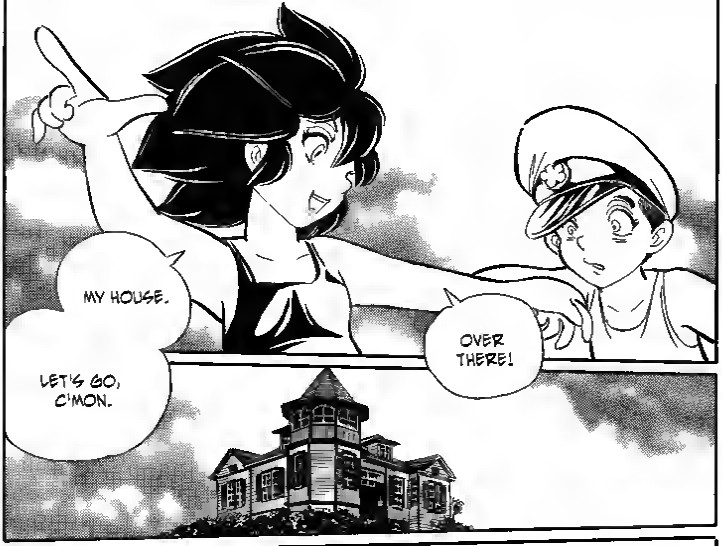
RUSTLE
THUMP
HEY!
YOU OKAY?

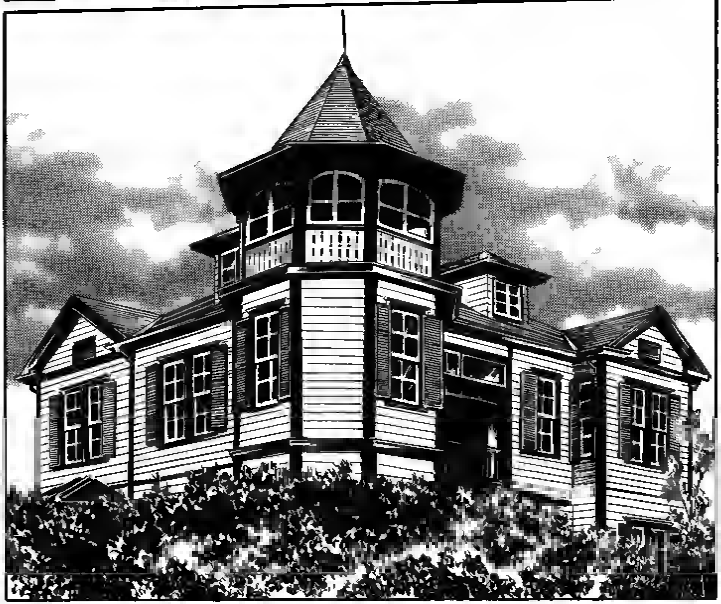
TLN: Shac Tsu is speaking hatingly like a foreigner.

COME TO MY HOUSE.
YOU!
IF YOU'RE LOST, COME.

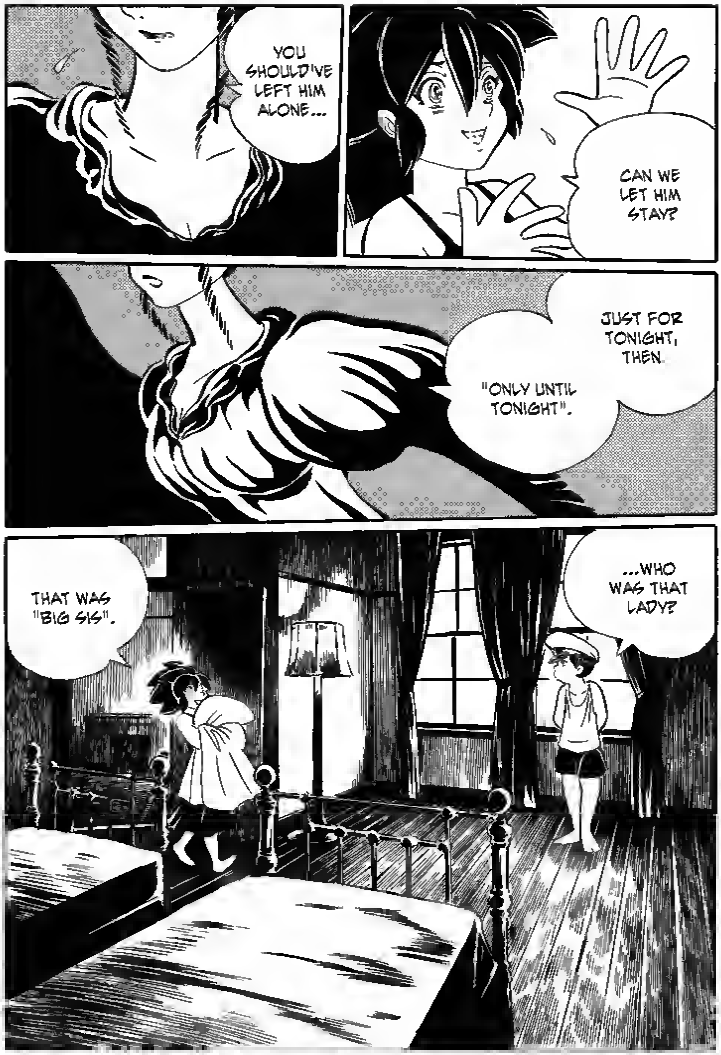

LET'S GO, C'MON.

ガサ…
ガサ…


OVER THERE!
MY HOUSE.
LET'S GO, C'MON.



WHO'S THE KID?
!
WHAT ON EARTH-- WHO DID YOU BRING, SHAO TSU!?
THIS KID GOT LOST.
HE CAME OUT OF THE FIELD.

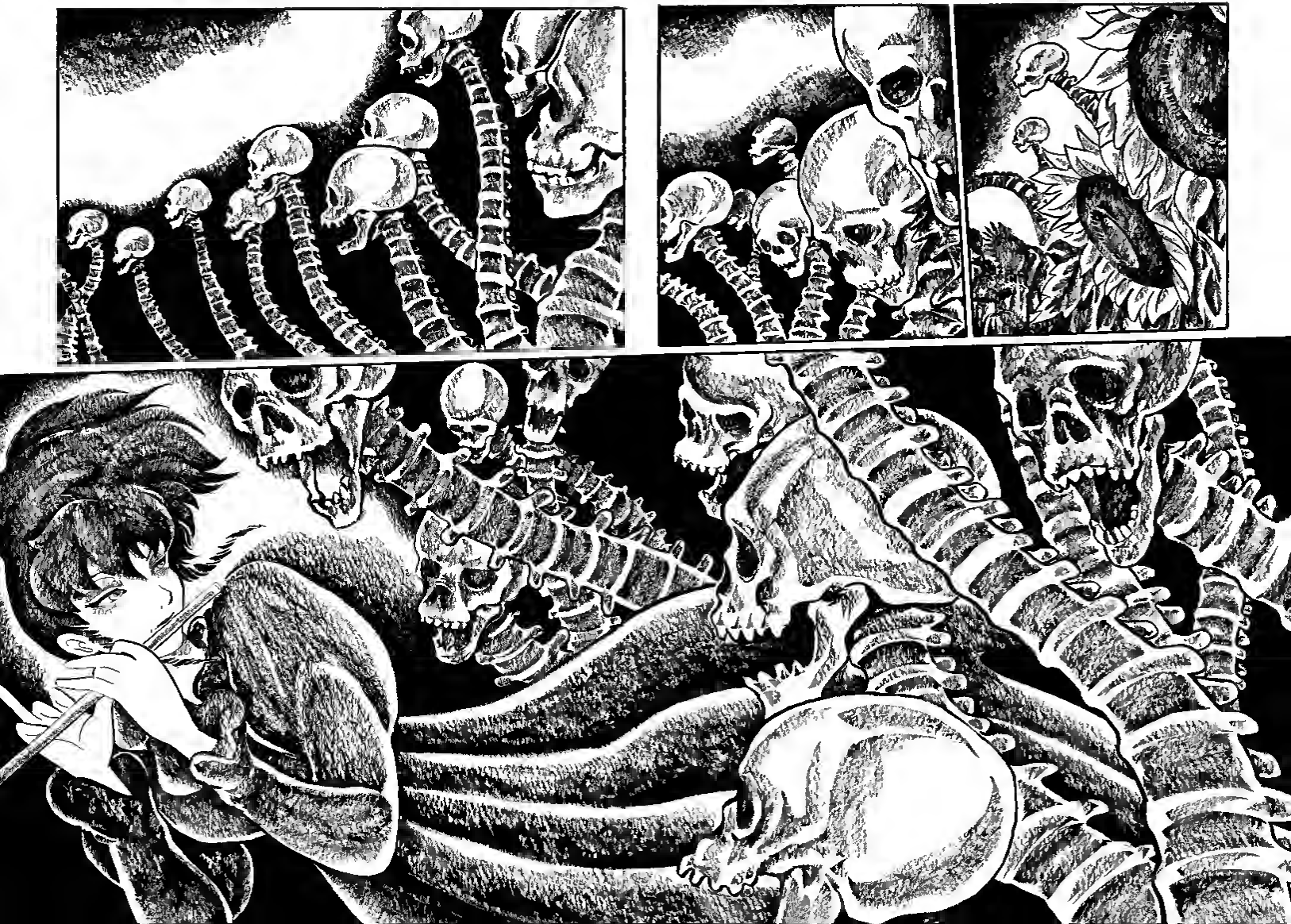

YOU SHOULD'VE LEFT HIM ALONE...
CAN WE LET HIM STAY?
JUST FOR TONIGHT, THEN.
"ONLY UNTIL TONIGHT".
...WHO WAS THAT LADY?
THAT WAS "BIG SIS".

ME AND SIS JUST ARRIVED IN JAPAN TOGETHER.
OHH... SO YOU'RE FROM THE CONTINENT?
BUT CALLING YOURSELF THAT WHEN YOU'RE A GIRL IS WEIRD.
OKAY, I AM NOT VERY GOOD WITH JAPANESE YET.
YOU SLEEP IN THIS ROOM TONIGHT.

TLN: Jiken Tou refers to herself with a masculine 「

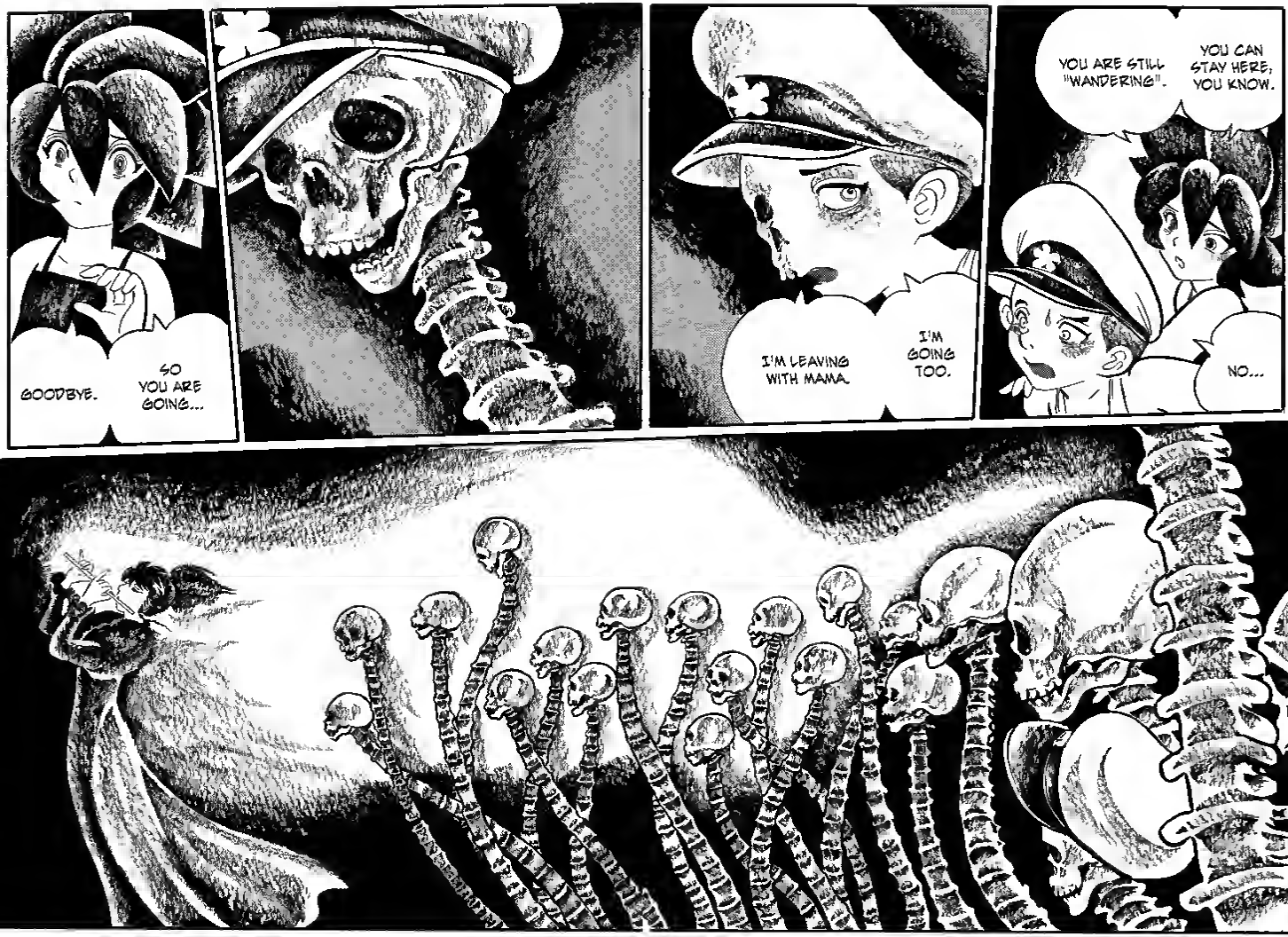
ROARRR
MAMA!!
MAMA!
GASP
WHAT WAS THAT DREAM JUST NOW...?

...I CAN HEAR A FLUTE.
HUH?



DON'T BE SCARED.
WHAT... IS THIS PLACE?
IS THIS AFTERLIFE?
SIS IS GUIDING "THEM".

TOO MANY PEOPLE DIED.
SO THEY STOP AND WAIT HERE.
THIS PLACE IS BETWEEN THE LIVING WORLD AND AFTERLIFE.
A WAITING AREA FOR GHOSTS.
GUIDING AND SENDING THEM OFF.
SEE? SIS IS
MA--
MAMA!?


GOODBYE.
SO YOU ARE GOING...
I'M LEAVING WITH MAMA.
I'M GOING TOO.
YOU ARE STILL "WANDERING".
YOU CAN STAY HERE, YOU KNOW.
NO...

GOOD GRIEF!
WHAT A HOUSE WE RENTED.

I HAD TO PERFORM A PIOUS ACT OF NO VALUE
RIGHT AFTER RETURNING TO JAPAN.
OH!
ROARRR
LOOK SIS, AEROPLANES!

ARE ABOUT TO DIE.
A LOT MORE PEOPLE
AHH...
3
ゴゴゴ

Chapter 15: Nightmares

GOODNESS GRACIOUS, WHAT A MESS.
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE DEFENSE IN JAPAN, THE LAND OF THE GODS?

THEY COULDN'T DO A DAMN THING TO STOP THE BOMBINGS.
"LET NIMITZ AND MACARTHUR COME," THEY SAID...

DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING, SHAO TZU!
THERE MIGHT BE SOME UNEXPLODED BOMBS.
IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL, THEY'LL...
FLASH!

KABOOOM!!
THUD!
THUD
POP!!

SH-SHAO TZU...?
SHAO TZU!?
SHAO TZU!!
AAAHH!!

THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FROM CHUGGING FOREIGN LIQUOR!
HEY SIS! WHAT ARE YOU DOZING OFF FOR?
HUH? WHERE ARE WE...?
GET A GRIP, ARE YOU DRUNK ALREADY?
WE'RE AT THE OCCUPATION FORCE'S CAMP.
WE WERE INVITED AS ENTERTAINMENT.

I'LL HANDLE THE G.I. JOES.
OH... IS THAT RIGHT?
OKAY, I PUT THE APPLE ON MY HEAD!
OH, SILLY SIS!
TAKE IT EASY FOR NOW.

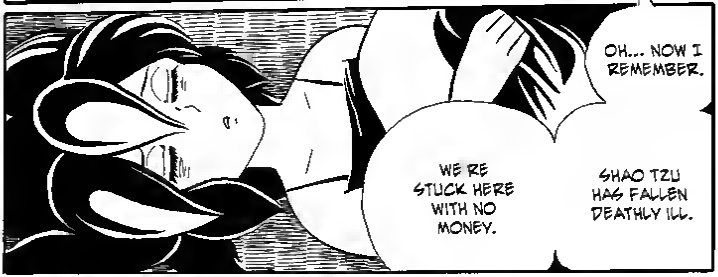
SO WHAT DID YOU WANT TO PLAY, AGAIN?
WHO THE HECK IS "WILLIAM TELL"?
STOP, SHAO TZU! DON'T DO IT!
THESE GUYS ARE DRUNK!!

HUH?
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
PHWEEE

SHAO TZUUUUUU!!
THUD
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG

..WHERE?

SHAO TZU?


OH... NOW I REMEMBER.
SHAO TZU HAS FALLEN DEATHLY ILL.
WE'RE STUCK HERE WITH NO MONEY.

M-MY BODY...
S-SIS...
WANT SOMETHING TO EAT?
HANG IN THERE, SHAO TZU...
IT'S GONNA... ROT...
SHAO TSU!?

SPLATTER
AAAAAAHHH!!

YOU WERE TOSSING AND TURNING.
WHAT'S WRONG, SIS?
GASP!
DID YOU HAVE A NIGHTMARE?
YOU...!
SWISH
!!

HUH!?
CLENCH
I'VE HAD ENOUGH!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, SIS!? WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU!?
WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO WORRY AND CARE ABOUT YOU!?
I LIVED FREELY WITHOUT A CARE FOR OTHER PEOPLE!!
I USED TO BE ALONE BY MYSELF!

IF I'M SO AFRAID OF LOSING YOU THAT I HAVE NIGHTMARES ABOUT IT,
I'D RATHER KILL YOU MYSELF!!
GUH!
SLUMP

SIS.
SIS, WAKE UP.
HUH...?
SIS,
YOU'RE ON A PILE OF BONES LEFT BY THE AIR RAIDS.
I BET THEIR SOULS WILL GET MAD AT YOU.

Translator's Note:

Suiton is a hot soup rather like udon, but with dumplings instead of noodles. While the original suiton is a traditional dish with many variations, the kind made during and immediately after World War II was very different. With shortages on (or lack of) rice, wheat flour, soup stock (konbu seaweed, fish) and flavoring (salt, miso, soy sauce), the resulting "suiton" was virtually flavorless and nutritionally deficient - a miserable incarnation of wartime poverty.

Accounts state that the dumplings, usually made with secondhand corn/soybean powder in place of flour, were often half-raw and tasted terrible. Hence Shao Tzu's last comment, which in context would be a rather unreasonable request for anyone other than Tenome.

SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS.
AH,
I CAN'T BLAME 'EM FOR SHOWING ME NIGHTMARES.
BUT OF COURSE...
...IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANT TO EAT SHAO TZU? NAME IT, I'LL GET IT.
HUHP THAT'S KINDA CREEPY SIS.
OKAY, I WANT A SUITON WITH SOME TASTE FOR A CHANGE.

◎END◎

Chapter 16: Memory of A Beast

TENOME IS MY NAME!
IT'S A SILLY STORY, BUT I GOT CAUGHT IN THIS HUNTER'S TRAP IN THE MOUNTAINS.
ALL THE BLOOD'S RUSHED TO MY BRAIN AND I'M IN A BIND HERE.
I... SEE...

UH... RIGHT, SORRY.
I'LL GET YOU DOWN NOW.
SORRY TO BE A BOTHER,
BUT HOW 'BOUT A HAND INSTEAD OF JUST STANDING THERE GAPING?

HIKING IN THE WOODS IS A NICE HOBBY.
THANKS FOR HELPING ME!
ARE YOU A STUDENT, BROTHER?
WHEN YOU WERE CAUGHT IN THE TRAP --
FOR A MOMENT BACK THERE,
WHAT'S THAT?
HOW CURIOUS...

I SAW YOU AS A BEAUTIFUL BEAST. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
IT WAS VERY STRANGE, EVEN FOR A HALLUCINATION.
IF YOU'RE EVER IN TROUBLE, MAYHAP I CAN HELP YOU.
IT MIGHT BE THAT YOU AND I ARE SOMEHOW "CONNECTED".
WHAT?
HMM...?
STRANGE MIND POWER
!

LICK
WHEN THAT TIME COMES, I'LL REPAY YOU FOR TODAY.
...AND SEVERAL YEARS LATER, I MET HER AGAIN.

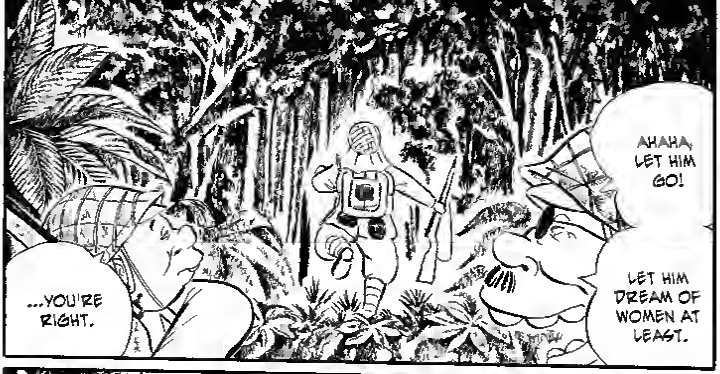
IT WAS IN SHANGHAI.
SHE WAS UP ON A STAGE...

SHE HAD BECOME A FINE ADULT WOMAN BUT I IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED HER AS THAT GIRL
WHEN OUR EYES MET, SHE SMILED A LITTLE.
AND AGAIN AT THAT MOMENT--

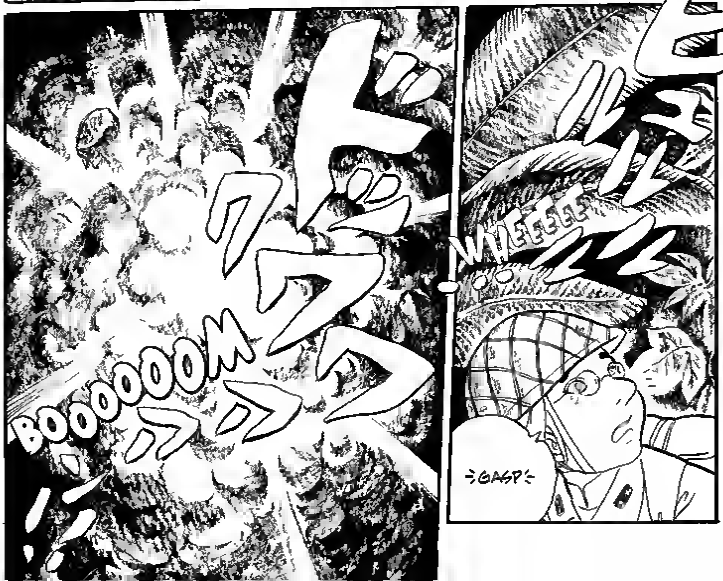
I SAW HER AS A BEAUTIFUL BEAST

EVEN IN THIS JUNGLE, I CAN STILL SEE HER AS IF SHE WERE IN FRONT OF ME.
HEH! IS THAT RIGHT?
UH!
GETTIN' SHOVED INTO THIS WAR ZONE, I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT WOMEN LOOK LIKE.
HA HA.

IT'S HER!?
HEY, WAIT!
WHERE YOU GOING?


AHAHA, LET HIM GO!
LET HIM DREAM OF WOMEN AT LEAST.
...YOU'RE RIGHT.

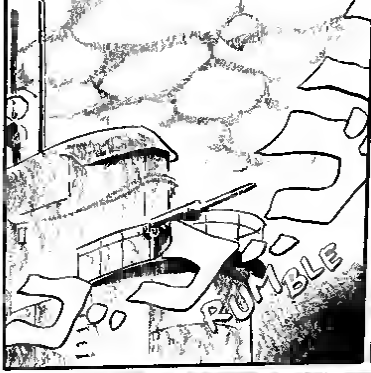
WHERE ARE YOU!?
HOOO!!


BOOOOOOM
WHEEEE
=GASP=

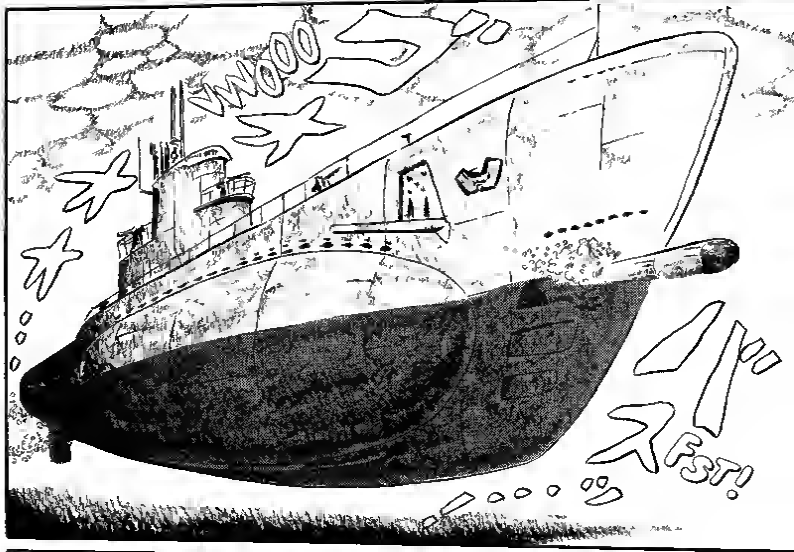
IT WAS CONCENTRATED FIRE FROM ENEMY ARTILLERY.
BOOOM
BOOM
BOOM
CRASH
BOOM
KABOOOM

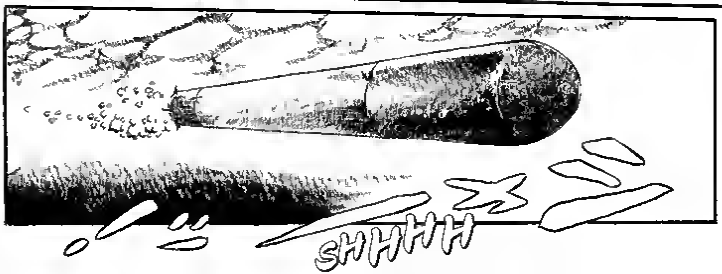
AFTER A FEW MINUTES, THEY STOPPED FIRING.
ALL THEY LEFT WERE SEVERAL HUGE HOLES.
THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE TRACE OF THE COMRADES I WAS CONVERSING WITH.
IF I HAD REMAINED, I WOULD'VE BEEN BLOWN APART TOO.

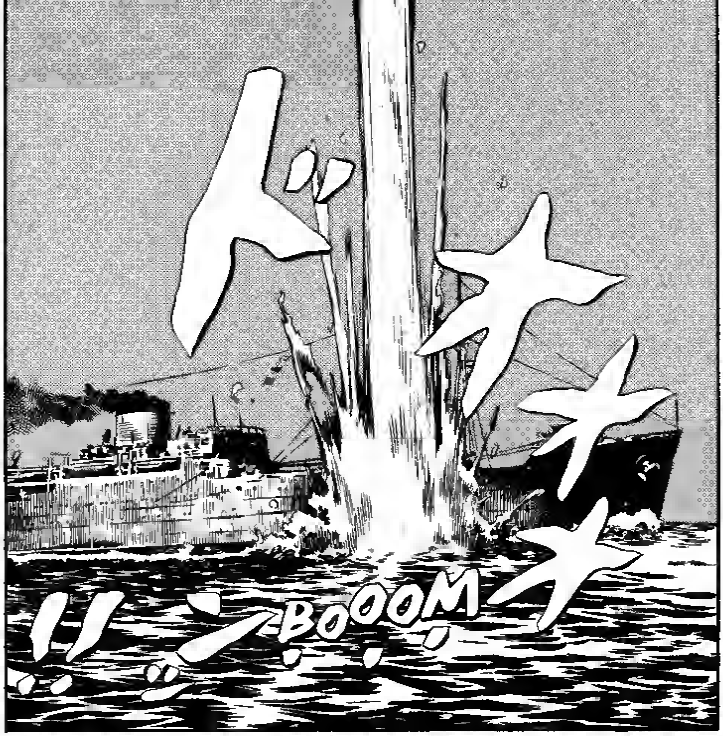
THAT GIRL... THAT BEAUTIFUL BEAST HAD SAVED ME.
THANKS TO HER, I'M ON THIS EVACUATION SHIP BACK TO JAPAN.
IT'S STILL TOO EARLY TO RELAX, SON.
OUR WATERS ARE SWARMING WITH AMERICAN SUBS AS IF THEY OWN THEM.

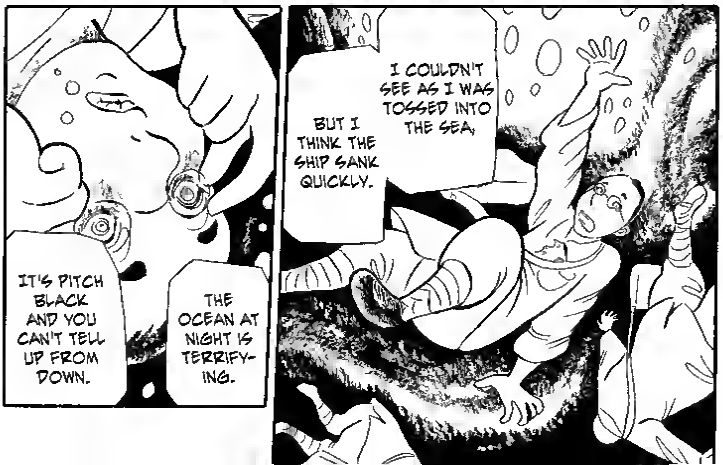

RUMBLE

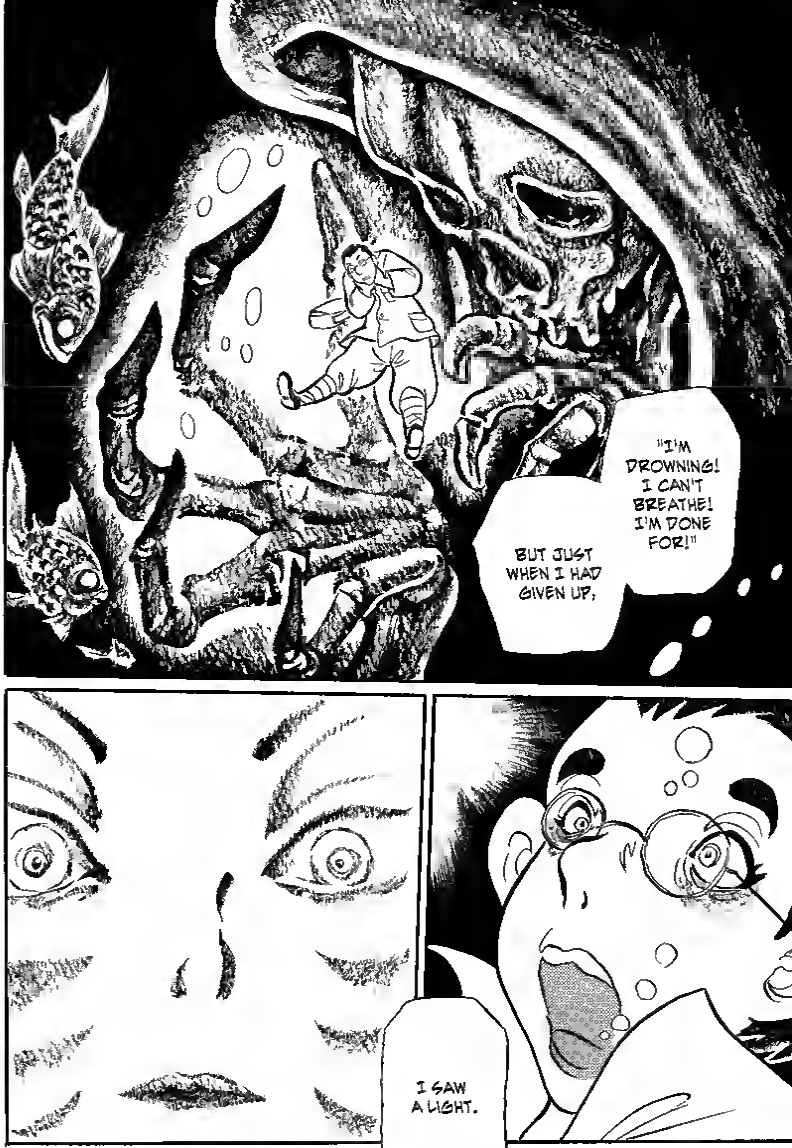
A TORPEDO MIGHT HIT US AT ANY MOMENT, YOU KNOW?


WOOO
FST!

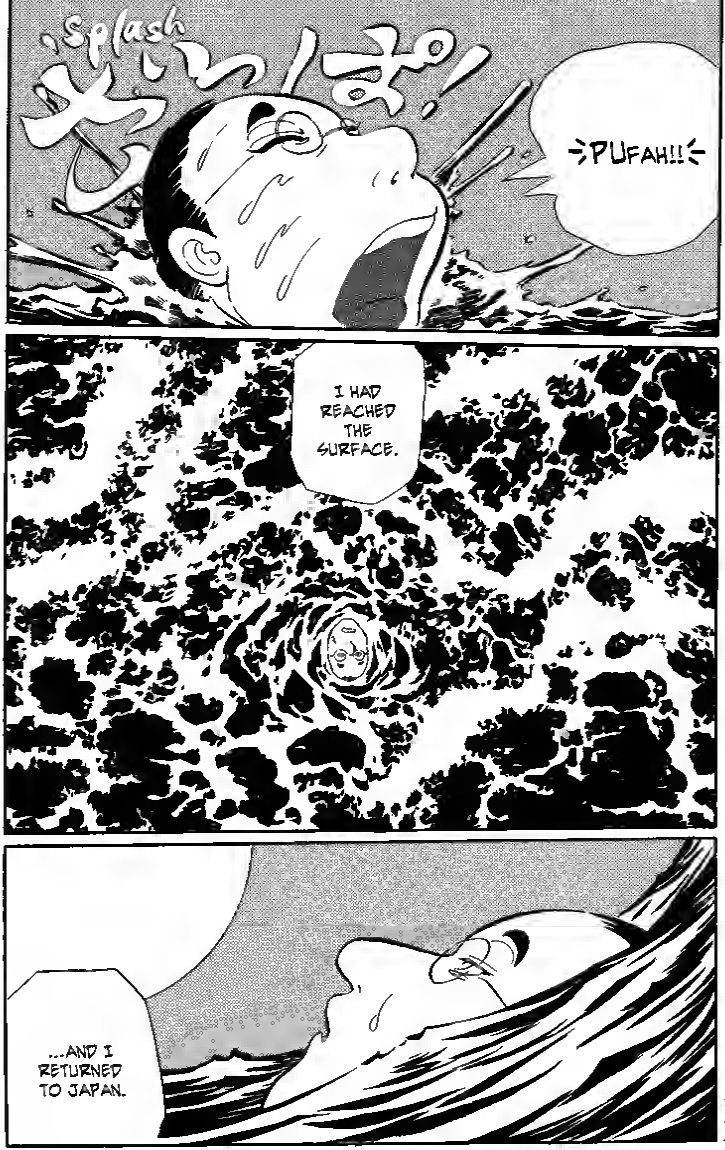

SHHHHH


ドオオオ
!!
BOOOM


I COULDN'T SEE AS I WAS TOSSED INTO THE SEA.
BUT I THINK THE SHIP SANK QUICKLY.
THE OCEAN AT NIGHT IS TERRIFYING.
IT'S PITCH BLACK AND YOU CAN'T TELL UP FROM DOWN.


"I'M DROWNING! I CAN'T BREATHE! I'M DONE FOR!"
BUT JUST WHEN I HAD GIVEN UP,
I SAW A LIGHT.

THE BEAST WAS IN THAT LIGHT.
I DES PERATELY SWAM TOWARDS HER.


Splash
ざばっ!
≒PUFAH!!≒
I HAD REACHED THE SURFACE.
...AND I RETURNED TO JAPAN.

...WELCOME BACK, DEAR.
I CAN LIE DOWN IN YOUR LAP LIKE THIS.
NOW, FINALLY--
I'M FINALLY HOME,
THANKS TO THAT WOMAN.
...IT'S ALMOST LIKE A DREAM.

WELCOME BACK.

HEY SIS,
WAS THAT SKELETON A FRIEND OF YOURS?

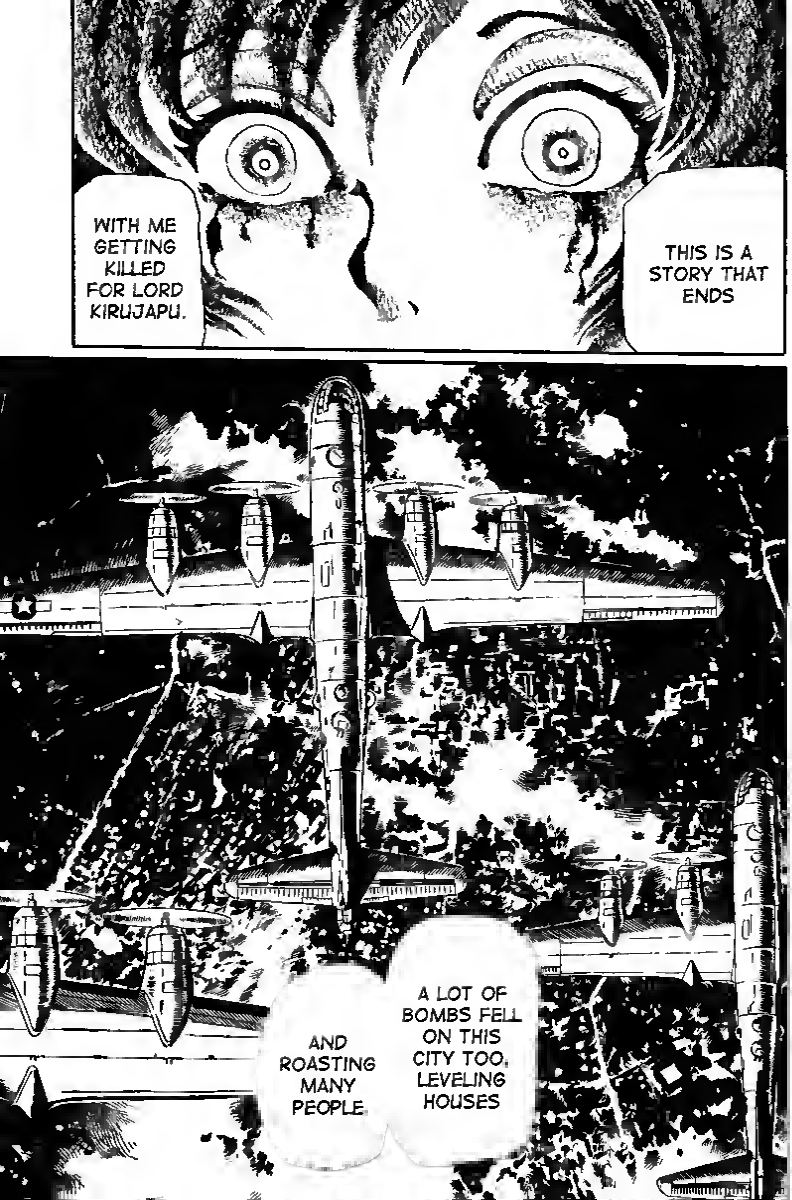
YES, AN UNLUCKY FELLOW.
HE HAD JUST GOTTEN HOME.

HIS WIFE HAD PERISHED IN AN AIR RAID,
AND HE HIMSELF COLLAPSED FROM AN ILLNESS.
WEIRD HOBBY, SIS.
YOU WERE TALKING WITH A SKULL?
I JUST SHOWED HIM A DREAM, THAT'S ALL.
MMM?

...HOW DID YOU KNOW HIM?
WAS IT A WHILE AGO?
AYE.
QUITE A-WAYS BACK...
LICK
I KNEW HIM ALL RIGHT,
A LONG TIME AGO.

Chapter 17: Lord Kirujapu

FROM THE WAY WE'VE MET JUST NOW,
I THINK THIS MUST BE FATE.
SO I WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT ME.
PLEASE LISTEN TO MY STORY.
IT WON'T BE VERY LONG.
IT WILL ONLY TAKE A MINUTE.

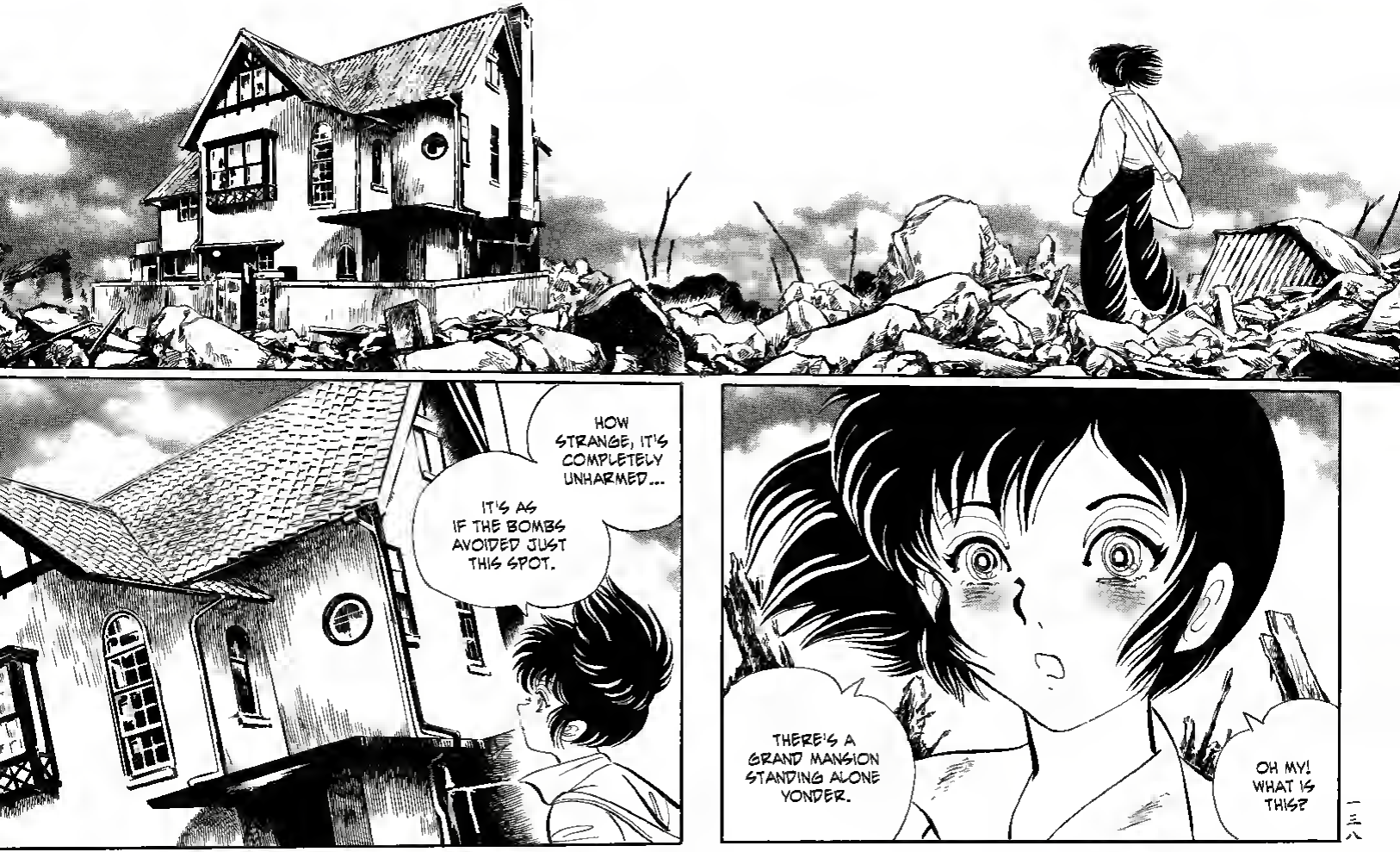

WITH ME GETTING KILLED FOR LORD KIRUJAPU.
THIS IS A STORY THAT ENDS
AND ROASTING MANY PEOPLE.
A LOT OF BOMBS FELL ON THIS CITY TOO, LEVELING HOUSES

PEOPLE'S HEARTS WASTED AWAY.
NOWHERE TO LIVE, NOTHING TO EAT.

EVEN WHEN THE WAR ENDED, OUR TROUBLES WEREN'T OVER.

BUT LIVING MAKES THEM HUNGRY.
THEY WERE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE,
The Cans
GHQ

I WENT LOOKING FOR FOOD BY MYSELF
AND WANDERED ABOUT AIMLESSLY.


OH MY! WHAT IS THIS?
THERE'S A GRAND MANSION STANDING ALONE YONDER.
HOW STRANGE, IT'S COMPLETELY UNHARMED...
IT'S AS IF THE BOMBS AVOIDED JUST THIS SPOT.

SOMEONE'S INSIDE.
OH --
...THEY'RE CALLING ME IN.
THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I WAS INSIDE THE HOUSE.

I WAS HEARTILY WELCOMED BY A LARGE NUMBER OF SHADOWY MEN AND WOMEN.
WELCOME, WELCOME!
WE ARE THE SERVANTS OF THIS HOUSE.
AND ARE BLESSED TO GIVE PRAYER TO LORD KIRUJAPU.
WE HUMBLY SERVE AND PROTECT THIS HOUSE --

MY MIND WENT BLANK .. I LET THEM DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED.
NOW YOU SHALL PLEASE LORD KIRUJAPU AS WELL!
WELL COME, INDEED!
I HAD MY FIRST BATH IN MONTHS, AND THEY WASHED MY BODY AND HAIR.

THEY DRESSED ME IN BEAUTIFUL CLOTHES,
AND FED ME AN EXOTIC FEAST.
FOR LORD KIRUJAPU!
ALL FOR LORD KIRUJAPU!
YES, THE "SACRIFICE" RECEIVES OUR FINEST HOSPITALITY BEFORE THEIR SLAUGHTER!

I WAS KILLED AS A SACRIFICE... FOR LORD KIRUJAPU.
FOR LORD KIRUJAPU!
FOR LORD KIRUJAPU!

AFTER THAT, MY CHOPPED UP BODY WAS THROWN AWAY
AND SOLD AS PORK OR BEEF.
I WAS BOILED WELL AND FLAVORED.
NOW I'M INSIDE YOUR MOUTH.
YES. THE MEAT YOU JUST PUT INTO YOUR MOUTH
WAS PART OF MY INTES-TINES.

BLECH! YECH!
FOUAGH!!
C-CAN'T BREATHE!
YOU FILTHY HAG! TELL ME WHERE YOU BOUGHT THIS MEAT!!
IT WAS TOSSED OUTSIDE FROM SOME MANSION!!
I DIDN'T BUY IT! I FOUND IT!
WHERE IS THIS MANSION!?
I'M GONNA GIVE THEM A PIECE OF MY MIND!!
DAMN YOU, JUST NOW I HEARD AN ENTIRE STORY FROM A PIECE OF INTESTINE!

OPEN UP!
I KNOW MY FRIEND IS IN THERE!!

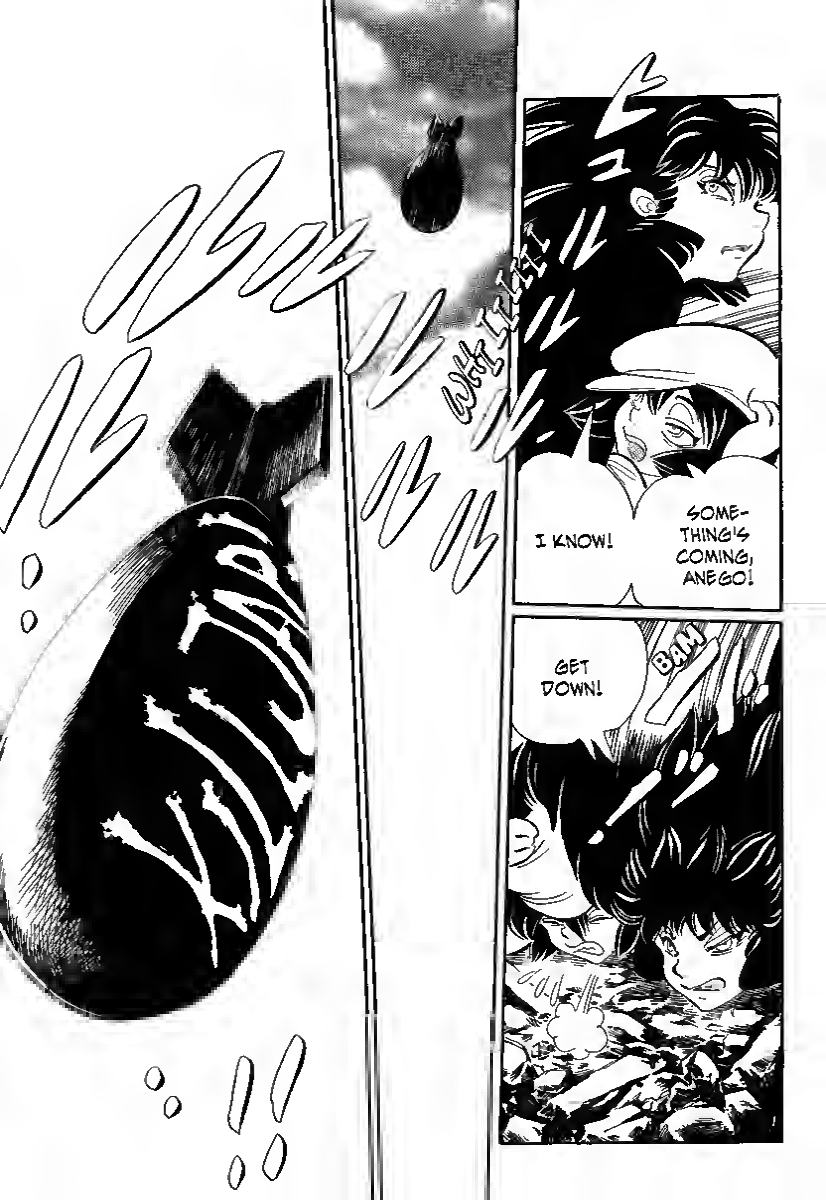
Lit. "sis" or "big sister"

WH-WHO ON EARTH IS THAT!?
SHE BARGED IN WITHOUT INVITATION!
SHE TORE DOWN OUR DOORS!
DO NOT LET HER IN! KILL HER!!

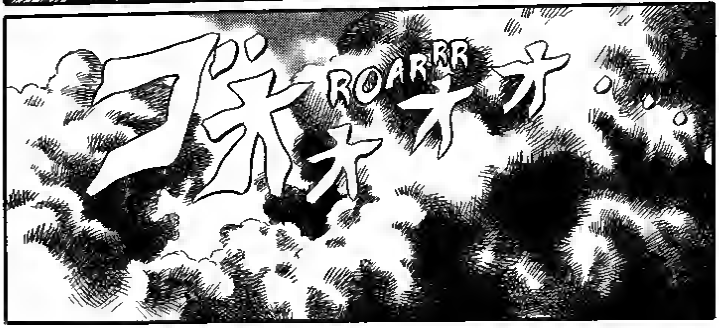
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE, SHAO TZU!!
SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU IGNORE MY WARNINGS AND CHARGE IN BY YOURSELF?

WE'RE DONE FOR! AN UNINVITED ONE HAS ENTERED!
THEY TORE DOWN OUR DOORS AND LET IN OPEN AIR! WE ARE FINISHED!
THE SACRIFICE IS STOLEN! THE SACRIFICE HAS ESCAPED!!

LORD KIRUJAPU WILL DESTROY US! LORD KIRUJAPU WILL FALL!!
THIS IS THE END, LORD KIRUJAPU SHALL BE ANGRY!
ヒュルルル…
WHILLL…


SOME-
THING'S
COMING,
ANEGO!
I KNOW!
GET
DOWN!
BAM!

KABOOOOOO
ドオオ


ROARRR
ゴオオ

ROARRR
ANEGO! WHAT WAS THAT?
A BOMB.
A BOMB DROPPED DURING THE WAR --
A BOMB THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO FALL ON THAT MANSION.
THAT RABBLE USED WITCH-CRAFT TO KEEP IT IN THE AIR ALL THIS TIME.
BY OFFERING SACRIFICES.

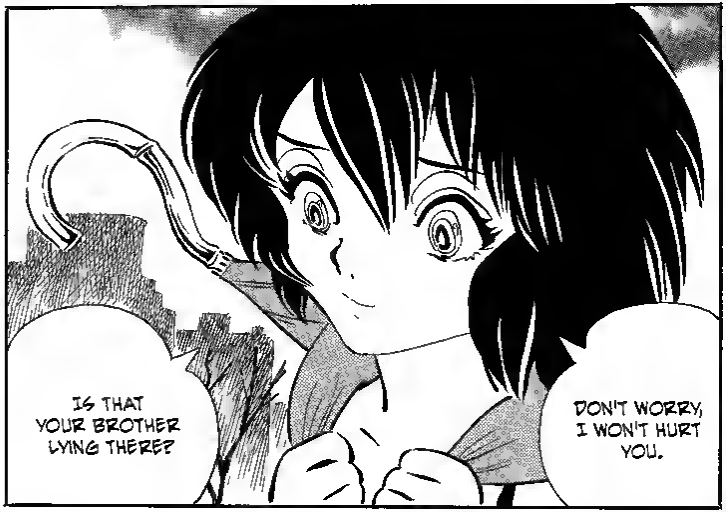
THEN WHAT WAS THAT BUSINESS ABOUT "LORD KIRUJAPU"...?
HUH?

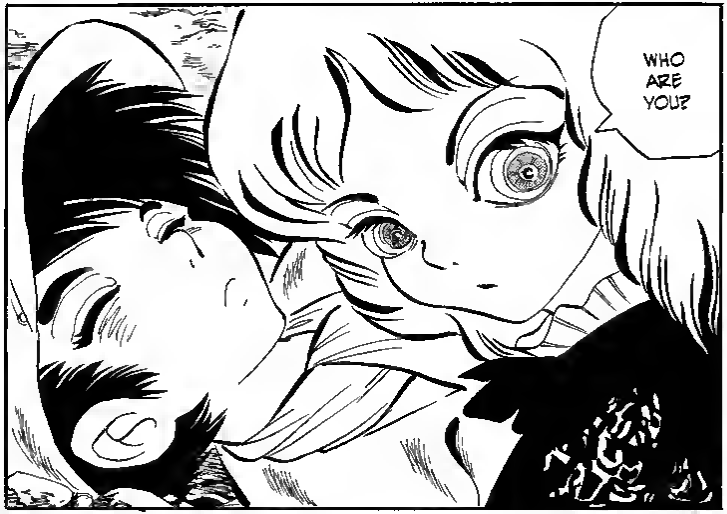
THAT BOMB-SHELL HAD "KILL JAP!" WRITTEN ON ITS SIDE.
THAT THING WAS LORD KIRUJAPU.
KILL JAP!

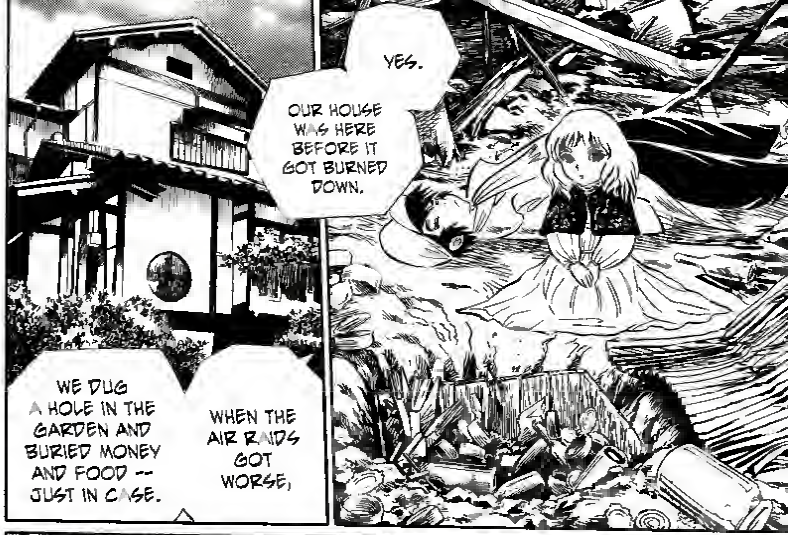
◎END◎

Chapter 18: The Blue-Eyed Doll

ONIICHAN.
ONIICHAN, GET UP.
PLEASE WAKE UP, MASARU-ONIICHAN!


IS THAT YOUR BROTHER LYING THERE?
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T HURT YOU.

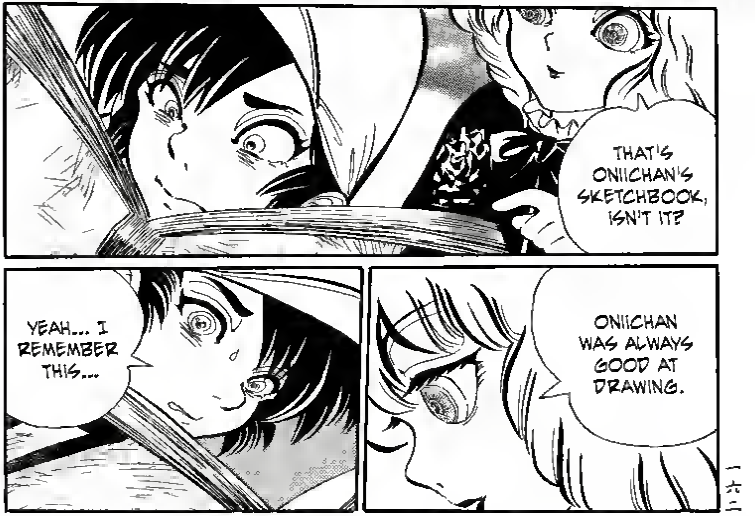

WHO ARE YOU?


YES.
OUR HOUSE WAS HERE BEFORE IT GOT BURNED DOWN.
WE DUG A HOLE IN THE GARDEN AND BURIED MONEY AND FOOD -- JUST IN CASE.
WHEN THE AIR RAIDS GOT WORSE,

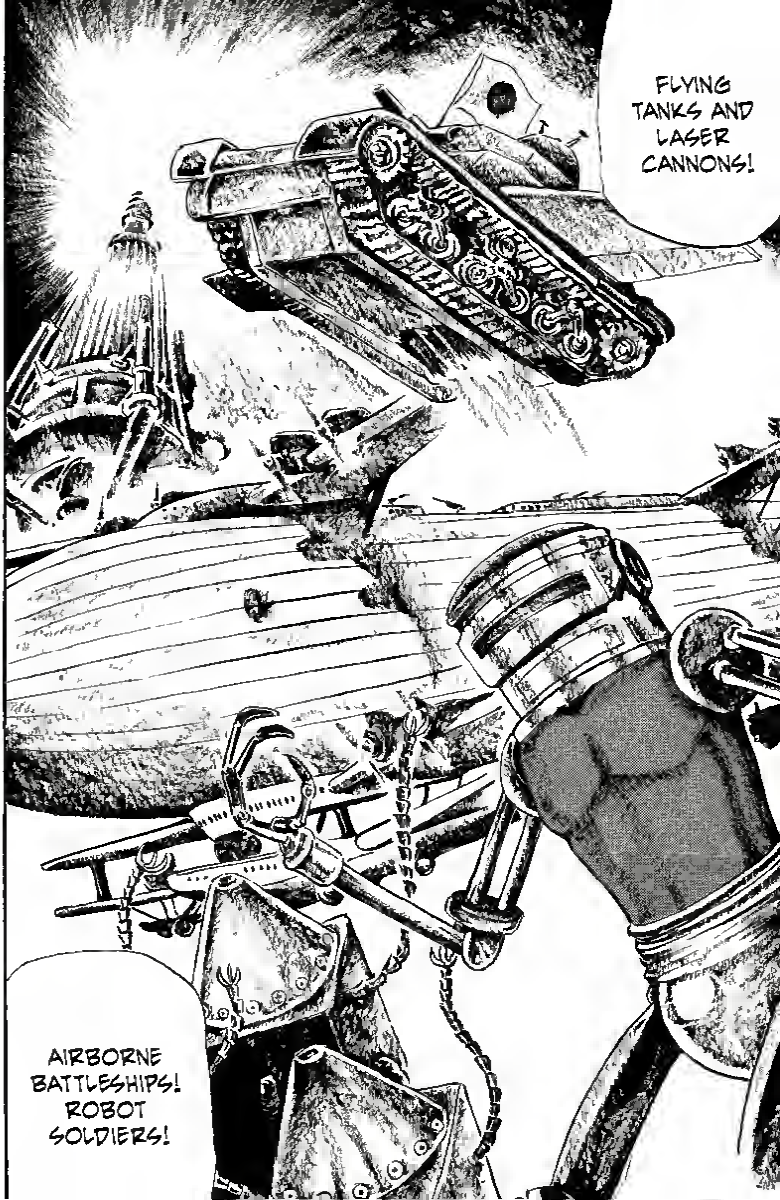
WHEN THE WAR ENDED, HE MANAGED TO MAKE IT BACK HERE.
BUT THE BURIED MONEY AND FOOD WERE STOLEN,
AND ONIICHAN COLLAPSED FROM DIS-APPOINTMENT.
AND OF COURSE, OUR HOUSE BURNED DOWN.
MOTHER AND FATHER WAS BURNED UP TOO.
ONIICHAN HAD EVACUATED TO THE COUNTRY-SIDE.

I SEE.
HERE, MOVE ASIDE FOR A SEC.
NN...
ONIICHAN,
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

SHUT UP, YOU! GET OUT OF THE WAY!
DAMN, THERE REALLY IS NOTHING LEFT.
HUH...?
WHAT'S THIS...


THAT'S ONIICHAN'S SKETCHBOOK, ISN'T IT?
YEAH... I REMEMBER THIS...
ONIICHAN WAS ALWAYS GOOD AT DRAWING.

THE "INVINCIBLE IMPERIAL ARMY".
"GRAND VICTORY FOR THE JAPANESE ARMY"!
AND THE FINALLY COMPLETED
ALL-POWERFUL SCIENTIFIC WEAPONS!


FLYING TANKS AND LASER CANNONS!
AIRBORNE BATTLESHIPS! ROBOT SOLDIERS!

JAPAN WILL DEFINITELY WIN!!
YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, MASARU-KUN!!
I THOUGHT JAPAN WAS GOING TO WIN LAST-MINUTE WITH OUR SECRET WEAPONS!!
THAT'S RIGHT JAPAN WAS SUPPOSED TO WIN!
EH?
UM--
WHO ARE YOU...?

I AM OFFICER YOSHIAKI HONGOU OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY'S R&D BRANCH!!
...ナナナ
HWOOOO
LONG I TOILED IN RESEARCH FACILITIES BUILT ON A SOUTHERN ISLAND,
STRIVING TO COMPLETE OUR ULTIMATE WEAPONS THAT WILL REDEEM THE IMPERIAL ARMY'S MILITARY INFERIORITY!
I HAVE NOW RETURNED WITH MY MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!!

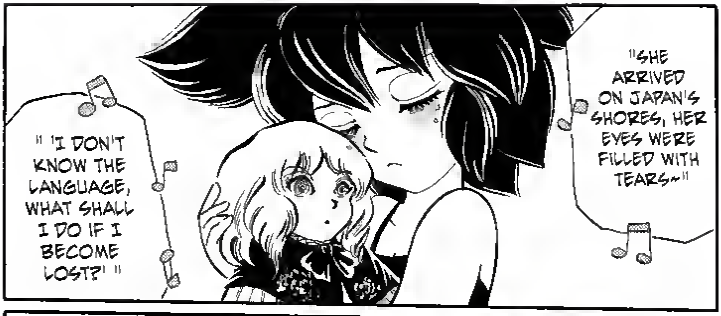
AWESOME!
WE WON'T LOSE THIS TIME, RIGHT!? JAPAN WILL DEFINITELY WIN!?
THAT'S RIGHT, AS IT SHOULD BE!
THERE IS NO WAY THE LAND OF THE GODS WILL BE DEFEATED!!
LONG LIVE JAPAN!!
HURRAH! HURRAH!
COME WITH ME, MASARU-KUN! LET US FIGHT TOGETHER! WE SHALL RECOMMENCE THE BATTLE!!
WE WILL CRUSH THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH SCUM!!
OF COURSE! THE FLYING TANKS AND LASER CANNONS! AIRBORNE BATTLE-SHIPS AND ROBOT SOLDIERS!!
WE SUCCEEDED IN BUILDING ALL OF THEM!!
B-BUT WAIT!
THE WAR'S OVER, JAPAN ALREADY LOST!!
THE ULTIMATE WEAPONS ARE FINALLY COMPLETE!
DO NOT WORRY! I TOLD YOU I RETURNED WITH MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!
EH?
REALLY?

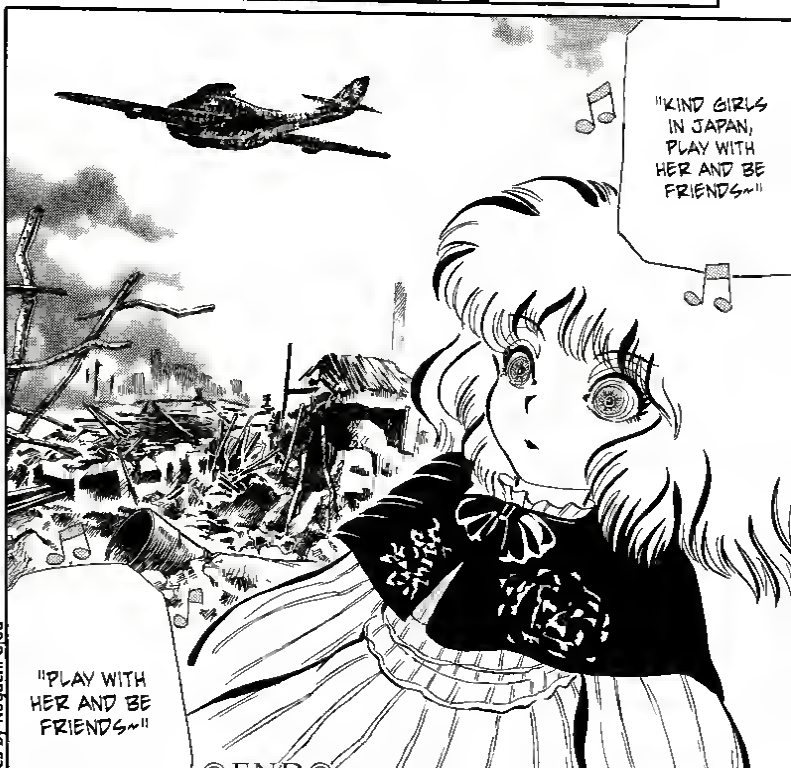
SHUT UP! I DON'T WANT TO BE CALLED ONIICHAN BY YOU!!
WAIT, ONIICHAN! YOU MUSTN'T GO WITH HIM!!
YOU'RE NOT MY REAL SISTER -- YOU'RE JUST A DOLL!
EH?
MY REAL LITTLE SISTER DIED!
MY SISTER WAS YOUR OWNER--
AND SHE WAS KILLED BY A BOMB FROM THE COUNTRY THAT MADE YOU!!

CRACK!
CRACK!
CRACK!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SHAO TZU?
AH...
ANEGO... WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BOY?
MM.
UNFORTUNATELY, THAT BOY...
HAS ALREADY GONE.

DON'T CRY, SHAO TZU.
WE'RE LEAVING.
"THE BLUE-EYED DOLL"
"WAS CELLULOID BORN IN AMERICA~"





Lyrics by Noguchi Ujou

AFTERWORD

As the stories progressed, I had to mature the main character into an adult woman. But once in a while I thought of drawing stories with her as a young girl, and drew "Memory of A Beast". I thought it'd be interesting to see the passage of time within a story. I bet I can use this method again.

Takahashi Yousuke